Chapter 6: The Last Crisis

1. The Transformed Internal and International Setting

Gorbachev's attitudes and policies on the German problem evolved on three interacting levels: (1) radicalization of political change and mounting economic and nationality problems in the Soviet Union; (2) redefinition of the Soviet-East German relationship in a new context of Soviet-East European relations; and (3) transformation of the perceived importance of West Germany for the reordering of European security and the mitigation of Soviet economic problems. Change that had been initiated 'from above' was now driven 'from below', and this applied to both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Mounting Domestic Problems

To turn to the first level, in his account of the Gorbachev era, Chernyaev dwells on the acute frustration he felt with the evolution of domestic political and economic affairs in 1989. He sensed a 'crisis of leadership' and harboured an 'inner discomfort' and 'dissatisfaction with Gorbachev that resulted from the great gap between domestic and foreign policy developments'. He calls that year a 'year lost'.[1128] Leonid Abalkin, deputy prime minister and chairman of a newly founded Commission on Economic Reform, in a speech to the Supreme Soviet on 29 June 1989, considered the Soviet economy to be in a 'state of emergency'. He deplored that for one and a half years, economic conditions in the Soviet Union had 'deteriorated further every month'.[1129] Gorbachev, at the Congress of People's Deputies, on 30 May 1989, regretted that the general public had not felt any major beneficial effects of perestroika. Whereas, previously, he had

1128 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, pp. 264, 315-316.
1129 Central Soviet Television, 29 June 1989.

characterized the economy as being 'on the verge of crisis', he now thought that the Soviet economy was 'in a state of crisis'.[1130]

The economic crisis had acute social repercussions. The growing gap between popular expectations raised by promises for the improvement of the economy and the acute supply problems in the agricultural and consumer goods sector created 'strong tensions,' made people 'insecure', and even led to 'embitterment', as Gorbachev confided to Honecker in June.[1131] In the following month, a wave of workers' strikes broke out in the Soviet Union. They began in the coal mines of the Kuznetsk Basin of Siberia and then spread to Vorkuta in the far north, to the Don Basin in Ukraine, Karaganda in northern Kazakhstan, and Sakhalin in the Far East. After that month, the Kremlin could never again have confidence that it was the master of events. Links were being forged between the radical reformers among the intelligentsia in the cities, nationalists in and between the republics, and the political uprising of workers across the country.[1132]

There was perhaps only one way to avoid shipwreck: not to attempt to steer against powerful currents but to navigate with them. A passionate plea not to battle the tide was made by Andrei Sakharov in private conversation with Gorbachev in May 1989 after a heated and unpleasant exchange at the first session of the Congress of People's Deputies. 'It is not for me,' Sakharov said,

> to tell you how serious things are in the country, how dissatisfied people are and how everyone expects things to get worse. There is a crisis of trust in the country towards the leadership and the party. Your personal authority and popularity are down to zero. People cannot wait any longer with nothing but promises. A middle course in situations like these is almost impossible. The country and you are at a crossroads – either increase the process of change maximally, or try to retain the administrative command system with all its qualities. In the first case, you must use the support of the 'left' [the reformers]; you can be sure there will be many brave and energetic people you can

1130 Central Soviet Television, 30 May 1989. – I caught of the population's frustration and failure to see any major beneficial effect of perestroika at that time. When, on the way from Sheremetevo airport to the centre of Moscow, I asked the taxi driver what movement forward he had seen in the last months he replied sarcastically: 'The only thing that's moving are Gorbachev's lips.'

1131 Transcript (*Niederschrift*) of the talks between Gorbachev and Honecker in Moscow, 28 June 1989, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2.035/60.

1132 Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb*, p. 233.

> count on. In the second case, you know for yourself whose support you will have but you will never be forgiven the attempt at perestroika.[1133]

But three years later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, speaking in reference to the constitutional changes Sakharov had suggested, Gorbachev was to lament: '*If we had only listened more carefully to Andrei Dmitrievich [Sakharov] ...*'[1134]

The catharsis of vigorous political debate, demonstrations, elections and the workers' strikes interacted with another factor that would be of crucial importance in the demise of both the internal and the external empire: the proliferation of ethnic conflicts and the upsurge in independence movements throughout the Soviet Union. The most determined national revival threatening the survival of the Soviet Union developed in the Baltic republics.

What, in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1987 and 1988, had been a drive for more autonomy within the constitutional framework of the Soviet Union, in 1989 turned into a powerful independence movement with torrents of demonstrations and protests against the Hitler-Stalin pact, the forcible incorporation of the three Baltic countries into the USSR and the subsequent executions and deportations. Management of the nationality problems was not helped by Gorbachev's inability to understand that national emancipation movements have hardly ever been deflected from their drive towards independence by arguments of economic rationality. Even after their achievement of independence, Gorbachev took the Baltic peoples to task for ingratitude. They forgot, he writes in his memoirs, that their well-being and the higher labour productivity in the Baltic republics *as compared to other Soviet republics* had been 'created by immense investments financed from the Union budget and of course also by qualified specialists and workers who had come to the Baltic area from Russia and other Union republics' and by the 'supply of fuel and energy free of

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1133 Ibid., p. 281. Earlier, at the congress session, Sakharov had taken the floor, imploring Gorbachev to endorse a 'decree on power' that would end the communist party's monopoly. Gorbachev had reacted angrily. He unceremoniously cut Sakharov off and proceeded to lecture him, adopting, as Remnick observes, an attitude of 'haughty disdain' and a 'peremptory, bullying tone'.

1134 Ibid., p. 282 (italics mine). The full sentence reads: 'If we had only listened more carefully to Andrei Dmitrievich [Sakharov], we might have learned something.'

charge (*darovomu*)'.[1135] He failed to understand that the Baltic peoples did not compare their level of socio-economic development with that of other Soviet republics but with their Scandinavian neighbours, notably with Finland and Sweden.

In another European part of the Soviet Union, unrest occurred in Moldova, with demonstrators demanding independence and reunification with Romania. Most sensitive for the whole character and cohesion of the Soviet Union and Russia's identity, however, was the emergence of Rukh, a powerful independence movement in Ukraine. Ordinary Russians could conceive of a Soviet Union without the Baltic republics and Central Asia. However, the Kievan Rus had been the precursor of the Russian state, and 'Little Russia' (as Russians historically called Ukraine), was being regarded in Moscow as an integral part of a Slavic Union. The idea of two, let alone three, separate Slavic states was simply anathema even to ordinary Russians and certainly the power elite in Moscow. The political survival of Gorbachev and the reform course, therefore, crucially depended on the prevention of Russian-Ukrainian separation and divorce.

The Pandora Box of nationalism, ethnic conflict and secessionism was opened also in Central Asia and the southern republics of the USSR. In April 1989, large demonstrations for autonomy and independence took place in Tbilisi, the Georgian capital. They were brutally suppressed by Soviet troops, with the use of spades and poison gas. In July, with the situation in the Georgian capital ostensibly defused, the sparks of ethnic strife ignited another fire in the area, in Georgia's Abkhaz Autonomous Region. In neighbouring Armenia and Azerbaijan, the upsurge of nationalist sentiment locked the two republics into conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. In Uzbekistan in June 1989, more than 50 people were killed and at least 500 injured in the Soviet Union's worst ethnic bloodshed in decades, as Uzbeks turned against the Meshketians, a Turkic minority. The uncertainties created by ethnic conflicts and the reassertion of Muslim identity induced many Russians to leave the area. Those remaining behind were organizing and demanding that the centre intervene on their behalf. In September, a special Central Committee plenary meeting on nationality problems finally took place. But its decisions and resolutions had practically no impact on the course of events.

1135 Gorbachev, *Zhizn*', Vol. 1, p. 511 (italics mine)

The Soviet leaders' preoccupation with internal affairs and their felt necessity to try to extinguish the flickering ethnic fires limited their ability effectively to manage foreign policy. For instance, in preparation for Gorbachev's planned visit to Bonn, 12-15 June, Shevardnadze was scheduled to visit the West German capital on 16 April. However, because of his involvement in Moscow's efforts to defuse the nationality conflict in Georgia, the foreign minister felt constrained to postpone the visit. Similarly, on 7 June, government spokesmen in Bonn let it be known unofficially that Gorbachev's program in West Germany would have to be curtailed due to domestic political problems in the USSR, including the outbreak of violent nationality conflicts in Uzbekistan and the on-going session of the Congress of People's Deputies. Soviet foreign ministry spokesman Gerasimov surmised that the session might be interrupted for the duration of Gorbachev's visit. Meetings with the chairmen of the four parties represented in the West German parliament were first removed from the program and then reinstated but a planned interview for the two main West German television channels was cancelled. Gorbachev also asked that several hours daily be kept free of any engagements so that he would be able, from the Soviet embassy in Bonn, to deal with reports from the USSR.[1136]

Eastern Europe: Breaking Through the Socialist Framework

To turn to the second level of analysis, the drive for national emancipation in Eastern Europe: a pivotal role here was played by the increasing realization among both party leaderships and popular movements that Gorbachev was disinclined to use force in order to prevent change. Nationality conflicts and independence movements in the Soviet Union and the way the centre attempted to cope with them forcefully interacted with the movements for national emancipation in Eastern Europe: as with regard to the German problem, the leadership's intense preoccupation with nationality issues in the Soviet Union was a drain on Gorbachev's time and energy; it reinforced his aversion to intervention in the internal affairs of the dependencies; and it eroded even further Gorbachev's will to empire. Clearly

1136 *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 8 and 9 June 1989. The talks with the chairmen of the four parties represented in parliament took place after a formal dinner on 12 June. The session of the Congress of People's Deputies ended on 9 June, a few days prior to Gorbachev's arrival in Bonn.

recognizable for everyone, his attempt to safeguard the integrity and viability of the USSR took precedence over maintaining control and cohesion in the bloc.

This was reflected in the evolution of the principle of Freedom of Choice. When Gorbachev visited Kiev in February 1989, he explained the principle, stating authoritatively that Soviet relations with the socialist states should be based on 'unconditional independence (*bezuslovnaia samostoiatel'nost'*), full equality [and] strict non-intervention in internal affairs'.[1137] This, in turn, presupposed 'responsibility of the party and government of each socialist country to its own people'.[1138] In other words, the local party leaderships could no longer rely on the Brezhnev Doctrine and Soviet military intervention to keep them in power. They themselves had to provide for their own political legitimacy and viability.

Up to that point, however, Gorbachev had said nothing about any freedom of choice for the *population* in the East Central European countries. This was to change a few months later, in June 1989,[1139] and confirmed and given wide prominence on 25 October 1989 by foreign ministry spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov. In an appearance on a U.S. television program, he discussed a speech made two days earlier by his chief, foreign minister Shevardnadze. The latter had said that the Soviet Union recognized the freedom of choice of all countries, including the member countries of the Warsaw Pact. Gerasimov told the interviewer that 'We now have the Frank Sinatra doctrine. He has a song, *I Did It My Way.* So every country decides on its own which road to take.' When asked whether this would include Moscow accepting the rejection of communist parties in the Soviet bloc, he replied: 'That's for sure … political structures must be decided by *the people* who live there.'[1140]

In the countries to which the principle of Freedom of Choice applied, the most important changes occurred in Hungary and in Poland. In November 1988, in *Hungary* the Social Democratic Party, outlawed since 1948, reconstituted itself, and at the beginning of March 1989 held its first national party congress. In the communist party – the Hungarian Socialist

1137 'Perestroika − delo vsekh narodov strany. Rech' M.S. Gorbacheva na vstreche s trudiashchimisia v.g. Kieve', *Pravda*, 24 February 1989.
1138 Ibid.
1139 Ibid.
1140 'Sinatra Doctrine', *Wikipedia.org*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinatra_Doctrine (italics mine).

Workers' Party (HSWP) – quite in contrast to the CPSU, radical reformist strands became ascendant This state of affairs, also unlike in the Soviet Union, later in the year led to the split of the party into a conservative and radical reformist wing. Parliament adopted a new constitution which abolished the monopoly of a single political party; codified human and civil rights, the separation of powers and equality of several forms of ownership; and opened the way to a market economy. In domestic political affairs, the new government under Prime Minister Miklós Németh and Foreign Minister Gyula Horn, was thoroughly committed to a reform socialist program and, in foreign policy, to a reorientation away from the Warsaw Pact and Comecon towards cooperation with Western European countries, notably West Germany (see below).[1141] The new government, therefore, reinstated the two main objectives promulgated by Prime Minister Imre Nagy that had prompted Soviet intervention in 1956: the establishment of a multi-party system and the declaration of neutrality.

On domestic political issues, however, it was *Poland* which, seen from the traditional Soviet perspective, broke even more fundamentally through the limits of acceptable change in the bloc. The forces of radical change lay in an accelerating political and economic crisis. In April 1989 the 'round-table' talks on constitutional reform were successfully concluded with an agreement on comprehensive parliamentary and electoral reform, later approved by the lower house of parliament, the Sejm. In June, the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) suffered a crushing defeat. Solidarity received 99 of the 100 seats in the Senate, the newly created upper house of parliament. In the Sejm, the communist party also found itself in a minority after the elections. The party had compiled a national list of 35 candidates, including such ostensible party reformers as Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski and Interior Minister Czeslaw Kiesczak as well as other members of the Politburo and top leaders of the communist coalition parties. All of these candidates failed to receive the necessary 50 percent of the vote and thus were unable to run in the second round of the elections. This stood in stark contrast to the votes cast for Solidarity. All of its candidates received more than 50 percent of the vote, and all of them were represented in parliament without having had to stand in the second round

1141 The new constitution was adopted in March 1989, and the election of a new government occurred in March 1989. The first national conference of the reformist wing of the HSWP was held in May 1989 in Szeged.

of elections. As a result, the PUWP lost its monopoly on power. Solidarity and the parties allied with it became the dominating force in parliament.

The stunning defeat of the communist party raised the question as to the legitimacy of its rule. President Wojciech Jaruzelski nevertheless appointed Kieszcak prime minister – a choice unacceptable to Solidarity since he had been one of the architects of the December 1981 state of emergency and the subsequent suppression of the labour organization. Unable to form a government, he resigned on 19 August. This raised a prospect unprecedented in the history of the Soviet bloc: the formation of a non-communist, in fact, *anti-communist* government. No surprise, then, that the PUWP made a last-ditch effort to prevent that prospect from becoming reality.[1142] Party chief Rakowski tried the traditional ploy of the 'Soviet card', asserting that a grand coalition was needed in order 'to dispel fears of allies and partners abroad'. He declared that the party had 'entered a period of open struggle for power and [was] threatened by a breach of agreements signed at the Round Table'. He went on: 'The situation is dangerous, but this is not the time to give up. The party should not commit suicide.'[1143]

In these conditions, Moscow's attitudes were crucial. The mainstream Soviet media mirrored the PUWP's concern, calling the situation in Poland 'dangerously aggravated'. At the governmental level, however, more restrained counsel prevailed. A foreign ministry statement said: 'The Soviet Union is vitally interested in what happens in a neighbouring friendly country that is a member of the Warsaw Pact ... but [the Soviet Union] has no intention of interfering.'[1144] On 20 August, Gorbachev did intervene but *de facto* in support of Solidarity. He called Rakowski, and in the course of a 40-minute telephone conversation, the Soviet party leader – according to PUWP spokesman Jan Bisztyga – encouraged the communist party to take part in the new government.[1145] The spokesman did not offer a precise summary of the phone call. Neither did Gorbachev, despite the

1142 The following summary of events draws on Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 69-71.

1143 *Pravda*, 21 August 1989, as quoted by Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 70.

1144 As reported by Warsaw Television Service, 17 August 1989, quoted by Zelikow and Rice, *Germany United*, p. 70.

1145 Francis X. Clines, 'Gorbachev Calls, Then Polish Party Drops Its Demands', *New York Times*, 23 August 1989.

fact that his telephone call was probably the only example of direct intervention in Eastern Europe between 1985 and 1990 in favour of radical change.[1146] However, the subsequent alteration in the tone and content of statements by the Polish Communist Party in favour of cooperation with non-communist parties and the designation of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a long-time leading member of Solidarity, for the post of prime minister would seem to have been the result of Gorbachev's involvement.

Addressing Solidarity's parliamentary caucus, the prime minister designate stated obliquely that his government would take immediate steps to 'make it possible for different economic organizations to be formed in the direction of the reform of the system of property.'[1147] In an interview with an Italian newspaper, Solidarity leader Lech Walesa put the point more bluntly. He said that the government intended to embark upon the road from a communist system of ownership to capitalism. Echoing, probably unwittingly, a then current popular East European joke about socialism as constituting 'the longest and most painful transition phase from capitalism to capitalism', he added: 'Nobody has previously taken the road that leads from socialism to capitalism. We are setting out to do just that, to return to the pre-war situation when Poland was a capitalist country, after having gone through a long period of socialism.'[1148]

What about East Germany? Was the Honecker regime to be exempted from the need to establish its own legitimacy and viability? Did Gorbachev disingenuously imply that the Freedom of Choice should be granted to the East German state and government but not to the *people*? The Soviet leader's reaction to the rapidly unfolding events in that country will be examined below in detail. As for the conceptual and declaratory level, ambiguity was dispelled in June 1989, during Gorbachev's visit to West

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1146 In his memoirs, Gorbachev fails to reflect on the first transgression of the parameters of the socialist framework of change in the bloc, nor does he report the telephone conversation with Rakowski. After having mentioned the election of Jaruzelski to the post of president and Rakowski to that of head of the PUWP, he merely muses that the 'constellation of political forces [in Poland] continued to remain unfavourable for the party that had ruled the country [Poland] for almost forty-five years. However, the labour organization Solidarity*, which now assumed political responsibility, at the same time did not achieve greater popularity*.' Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 2, p. 347 (italics mine).

1147 John Tagliabue, 'Wider Capitalism Encouraged by Polish Leaders', *New York Times*, 24 August 1989.

1148 *Il Messagero* (Rome), 22 August 1989.

Germany. The Joint Soviet-West German Declaration, signed on that occasion, acknowledged the 'right of all *peoples* and states freely to determine their destiny.'[1149] It went even further by endorsing the 'precedence of international law in domestic and international politics' and 'unqualified respect for the norms and principles of international law, *especially respect for the right of peoples to self-determination.*'[1150] According to West German understanding, this term was the international legal counterpart to Gorbachev's Freedom of Choice. As interpreted in four decades of political and legal discussion in the Federal Republic, the right of self-determination was denied to East Germans. It could be exercised only in free elections, which would also be the precondition for the re-establishment of German unity. The Joint Declaration was carefully prepared and extensively discussed point by point over a period of six months.[1151] Thus there was agreement between Moscow and Bonn on the principle of popular legitimacy. Yet there was no Soviet position, and there would never be official clarification, as to whether that principle was compatible with the one-party state in the GDR and whether it was being violated in that country through undemocratic elections.

The dramatic internal changes in Eastern Europe had fateful consequences in the international realm. On 2 May 1989, an event of world historic significance took place when border units of the Hungarian armed forces began to dismantle obstacles along the Austro-Hungarian border.[1152] This was not the first time that the Iron Curtain was dismantled in Hungary. In 1955, in the era of Soviet acceptance of Palmiro Togliatti's idea of 'diversity in unity' in international communism and the first major post-World War II thaw in East-West relations, Hungary had torn down

1149 'M.S. Gorbachev v FRG. Sovmestnoe zaiavlenie', *Izvestiia*, 15 June 1989 (italics mine).

1150 Ibid. (italics mine).

1151 Interviews with Teltschik and Chernyaev; Helmut Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, as portrayed by Kai Diekmann and Ralf Georg Reuth (Berlin: Propyläen, 1996), pp. 40, 47-49; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 625.

1152 The significance of the dismantling of the Iron Curtain in Hungary for triggering a process that was to lead in the final analysis to German unification, beginning on 2 May with the first physical measures at the borders and culminating in Budapest's authorization of the exit of thousands of East Germans to Austria on 11 September (see below) has been emphasized by Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 65-85, and Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 637-42. In contrast, Gorbachev in his memoirs fails even to mention Hungary's decision.

the border obstacles. This was one of the main reasons why hundreds of thousands of Hungarians were able, in the aftermath of the November 1956 popular revolt, to cross the borders into Austria. In 1957, as a result of Soviet intervention, a new protective fence had been erected. In the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s, mines were cleared from the security zones, but an elaborate electric warning system was installed and new lanes for border patrols were added. The measures adopted in May 1989 re-established the permissive regime of the fall of 1956, and they were more than a simple demolition job. They were political symbolism, marking the disappearance of the Iron Curtain. Reporters from both East and West were invited to witness the event, and to underline its significance, special equipment from Austria was used to extract the concrete posts from the soil. Pieces of barbed wire were distributed as souvenirs.[1153]

The dismantling of the border obstacles had primarily an internal rationale. Since most Hungarians were permitted to travel freely to Austria and only very few of the travellers had used the opportunity that presented itself to stay abroad, the border regime was – as Prime Minister Németh thought – a 'cruel anachronism'. He also considered the border obstacles to be like a 'second Berlin wall'.[1154] Yet when the Hungarian government adopted the decision on the opening of the borders, it was still willing to adhere to a 1968 agreement and the previous practice according to which only East Germans with valid GDR exit stamps in their passports would be allowed to cross the Hungarian-Austrian border. East Germans trying to cross illegally would continue to be arrested and sent back to the GDR.[1155] But the dismantling of the border obstacles was bound to create severe complications for East Germany and evoke concern in Prague and Bucharest. East German travellers, principally in Hungary but in other East European countries as well, would attempt to leave and then, frustrated in their effort, would seek refuge in West German embassies. In the

1153 Michael Frank, 'Ungarische Grenzaktion: Ein erstes Loch im Eisernen Vorhang', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3-4 May 1989. The measures were taken in implementation of a Hungarian government decision adopted in February 1989.

1154 Németh in an interview with Friedrich Kurz, 'Ungarn 89', in Dieter Grosser, Stephan Bierling and Friedrich Kurz, *Die sieben Mythen der Wiedervereinigung: Fakten und Analysen zu einem Prozeß ohne Alternative* (Munich: Ehrenwirt, 1991), p. 130.

1155 Ibid., pp. 37-39, 123-130. This summary of the Hungarian decision to open the borders and its international repercussions also draws on Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified,* pp. 63-64.

summer, more than 200,000 East Germans were on vacation in Hungary, many of whom on camping sites close to the borders and waiting for an opportunity to travel west. The number of would-be emigrants in the West German diplomatic representations in Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, and East Berlin was rising. On 9 August, Hungary stopped enforcing the return of GDR citizens. Its border authorities kept turning back thousands of East Germans but hundreds were slipping through the net each week. By late August thousands of East Germans were awaiting their fate in Hungarian detention camps and several hundred in the West German embassy compound in Budapest. On 25 August, Németh and Horn held secret talks with Kohl and Genscher at Schloss Gymnich near Bonn. The Hungarians informed the West German chancellor and the foreign minister that they were prepared, as Horn later wrote, to embark on the risky and 'illegal' step to open the Hungarian-Austrian border on a specified date at night until early morning so that several thousand GDR-citizens could escape.[1156] Implementation of a corresponding decision occurred in the night of 10-11 September.[1157]

Several conclusions are appropriate. First, the events in Hungary were an early indication of uncontrolled and uncontrollable dynamics becoming dominant in the bloc. Leaders in both East and West were forced to react to unforeseen events, in the process altering and often abandoning altogether well established policies and preferences. As for the West German government, its attitudes and policies had been governed by the then still valid principle of Ostpolitik, that is, to avoid undercutting the Honecker regime while attempting to alleviate the hardships of the division. In fact, in the Schloss Gymnich talks, the German chancellor had characterized the position of the government in Bonn as a balancing act: to avoid destabilizing the GDR but at the same time not to strengthen it.[1158] But the increasing popular pressures 'from below' in East Germany and the Hungarian decisions on emigration led to a shift in Bonn's attitudes. Starting from

1156 Gyula Horn, *Freiheit, die ich meine: Erinnerungen des ungarischen Außenministers, der den Eisernen Vorhang öffnete*, trans. Angelika and Péter Máté (Hamburg: Hoffman and Campe, 1991), pp. 319-20.

1157 Kohl says that more than 6,000 people crossed the borders from Hungary into Austria on 10-11 September and that – presumably prior to the opening of the Berlin wall – more than 100,000 East Germans were to follow; Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschland's Einheit*, p. 84.

1158 Horn, *Freiheit, die ich meine*, p. 319.

August and September 1989, the West German government was less inclined to take the vulnerabilities and sensitivities of the Honecker regime into consideration and more prone to pursue a new agenda of pressure for change in the GDR.[1159]

Second, governments and communist party leaderships in the bloc were increasingly acting in accordance with their own definition of interests and taking fateful and far-reaching decisions without consultation of the imperial centre. As amply demonstrated, for instance, by East Berlin's credit deals with Bonn and its refusal to 'change the wallpaper', independent action in the bloc was certainly not unprecedented. But in 1989 the tendency grew in direct proportion to Gorbachev's manifest disinclination to involve himself actively in bloc policy. In Horn's view, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze would most likely have 'consented to our decision' to let the East Germans leave *if* they had been asked. But they were not. The Hungarian leaders proceeded from the, in all likelihood correct, assumption that their Soviet counterparts knew about the Hungarian plans through their contacts with East Berlin and that they were being pressured to intervene on its behalf. There was another, more unlikely, source of information for the impending Hungarian move: the West German chancellor. In a telephone conversation shortly after the Schloss Gymnich talks, Kohl told Gorbachev what the Hungarian government was planning and asked him whether it had his support. The Kremlin leader had only one comment: 'The Hungarians are good people.'[1160] It appears that Budapest, of all the major players in the event, was the last source of information for Moscow. According to Horn, 'we informed the Soviets only on the last day' before adopting the measures of 10-11 September.[1161]

Third, the Hungarian events brought into sharp focus an accelerating East German malaise. Conditions were beginning to resemble those obtaining in the months of crisis before the building of the Berlin wall. In fact, the main function of the wall as compelling the East German population to cooperate with the regime was superseded by the Hungarian decisions. As in the spring and summer of 1961, the East German regime was now again being faced with the syndrome of *Torschlußpanik*, the concern

1159 This change has been described in more detail by Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 65-67).

1160 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 75. The exact date of the telephone conversation is unclear.

1161 Horn, *Freiheit, die ich meine*, p. 326.

among the GDR citizens that to leave the country was a matter of now or never because, either as a result of a conservative backlash in Moscow or an SED decision to outlaw travel to Czechoslovakia, the gates would soon be closed. Again as in 1961, this concern enormously swelled the number of would-be emigrants and produced an exodus of mostly young and enterprising citizens. This, in turn, exposed the tenuous legitimacy of the communist regime, the glaring gap between the quality of life in the two Germanys and the wide gulf between an entrenched party leader and a restive society. It also threatened to have negative repercussions on East German economic development.

Fourth, the Hungarian decisions on emigration and Soviet reactions illuminated East Germany's increasing isolation in the bloc. This was the major difference in conditions between 1961 and 1989. Given the fundamental congruence of Soviet and East German interests in the early 1960s, the unbroken will to empire in Moscow and tight bloc discipline Ulbricht had been able to muster collective Warsaw Pact support for the building of the wall. In the late 1980s, however, except on the issue of the continued existence of the GDR, Soviet and East German interests and policies diverged; the will to empire no longer existed in Moscow; bloc discipline had evaporated; and East Berlin was able to draw support only from like-minded orthodox party leaderships in Prague and Bucharest. Its pressures on Budapest to comply with the 1968 agreement, therefore, were to no avail. Informed by Horn of the Hungarian decision on 31 August in the GDR capital, foreign minister Fischer exclaimed in exasperation: 'This is blackmail! In fact, this is treason! Don't you realize that you are thereby abandoning the GDR and joining the other side? This will have grave consequences for you.'[1162] SED Politburo member and CC Secretary Günter Mittag, in a meeting later in the day, according to the East German transcript, 'strictly opposed [the Hungarian government's] intention to ignore agreements concluded with the GDR' and 'demanded of Comrade Horn to reconsider the position which he had taken'.[1163] On 9 September, Honeck-

1162 Ibid, p. 324.

1163 Notes (*Vermerk*) on the meeting between Mittag and Horn, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2A/3238. Fischer was present at the meeting. Judging from Horn's report on the talks, despite the clarity of Mittag's demand (*Aufforderung*), the latter tried a more conciliatory and diplomatic tack than the one Fischer had adopted earlier; Horn, *Freiheit, die ich meine*, p. 324.

er personally intervened and, in a telegram to Hungarian party leader Rezsö Nyers, attempted to reverse the Hungarian government's decision. But this effort, too, was wasted.[1164]

Fifth, the Hungarian government's actions underlined the crucial importance of West German economic leverage in the disintegrating bloc. As Fischer's rage indicated, the Hungarian government had made a deliberate decision to give preference to the relations with West Germany over those with East Germany and to reorient itself away from the bloc towards, as Horn put it, 'Europe'.[1165] The reason for this had much to do with economics. In their memoirs, Kohl and Genscher emphatically rejected Western news reports and East European rumours that there was a direct linkage between West German money and the Hungarian decisions. In the secret talks at Schloss Gymnich, Kohl asked Németh several times whether the Hungarians expected West German concessions (*Gegenleistungen*) in exchange for their refusal to return would-be East Germans refugees to the GDR, and each time the Hungarian prime minister had replied: 'Hungary will not sell people.'[1166] But although the assertions of the absence of a direct linkage in the Gymnich talks are credible, neither the West German nor the Hungarian leaders involved have denied that linkage was *implicit* on a more general level. Kohl, in his own words, considered it simply a matter of fact, or self-evident (*selbstverständlich*), that 'we would help those who help us. The Hungarians could have acted quite differently. It was not an easy decision for the government in Budapest in this situation, despite valid agreements with the GDR government simply to say: We let the Germans go.'[1167] It is for this reason that the negotiations in progress for the extension of a West German credit to Hungary in the amount of DM 500 million were successfully concluded shortly after the Gymnich talks and that Bonn vigorously supported Budapest in its endeavour to become a member of the European Community. 'I am convinced,' Horn has acknowledged, 'that the Hungarian reform forces, above all at the time of change in 1988-89, would not have managed to stay on top without practical [West German-Hungarian] cooperation and [West German] cred-

1164 Ibid., pp. 325-26.
1165 Ibid., p. 322.
1166 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschland's Einheit*, p. 74. The West German foreign minister has similarly contended that 'Our Hungarian guests did not make financial demands'; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 640.
1167 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 74.

its.'[1168] As will be argued below, similar implicit linkages, rather than specific and direct conditionalities, applied to the nexus between West German economic incentives and Gorbachev's later consent to German unification and united Germany's membership in NATO.

West Germany: The New Soviet Priority

To turn to the third dimension of the transformed domestic and international setting, Soviet policy towards *West* Germany: in May 1989, as we have seen, the Hungarian leadership had begun to reorient its foreign policy toward that country and Western Europe. A convincing case can be made for arguing that the Soviet leadership followed suit only one month later. The occasion for Moscow's reorientation was Gorbachev's long delayed visit to West Germany. Chernyaev has unequivocally made that very point. Speaking about the visit and its results, he concludes: 'Even in the GDR, at top and bottom levels, it was [now] understood that the Federal Republic was to be given priority in Soviet policy towards Germany. [West Germany] would also be the main partner for the construction of a new Europe.'[1169] What are the reasons that would justify such a far-reaching conclusion?

One of the reasons is of a general nature and lies in the international political realm. Genscher has pertinently observed: 'In retrospect, one can say ... that German foreign policy immediately prior to entering into the most dramatic phase of post-war policy had reached the pinnacle of its international influence.'[1170] This fact of international life was reflected not only in Gorbachev's reorientation of priorities but also in President Bush's invitation to West Germany to join the United States in a 'partnership in leadership'.[1171]

A second, more specific factor can be found in the removal of one of the major obstacles to a rearrangement of Soviet-West German relations: NATO's decision at the Brussels summit meeting on 30 May not to insist on the immediate modernization of short-range nuclear missiles. It is difficult in retrospect to comprehend the highly emotional character of the con-

1168 Horn, *Freiheit, die ich meine*, p. 318.
1169 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 291.
1170 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 626.
1171 In a speech in Koblenz on 30-31 May 1989.

troversies which preceded the decision, both within the Western alliance and between the Soviet Union and NATO. Indeed, the acrimonious debate from January to May 1989 about theatre nuclear weapons appears quite incongruous in view of the fact that three years earlier Reagan had acceded to Gorbachev's vision of a nuclear-free world, scholars had been talking about a 'post-nuclear era,' agreement had been reached on the abolition of both long-range and medium-range nuclear missiles, and proposals for comprehensive disarmament in conventional weapons were seriously being discussed. Finally, the conflict seems even more incomprehensible considering the rapidly changing political context in 1989. Given the New Thinking, with its by then clearly demonstrated implications for a reduction of the East-West military competition in Europe, it was no longer appropriate, if it ever had been, to look upon nuclear weapons as a primarily military issue. Genscher recognized this with great clarity and was determined to prevent an SNF modernization decision – as was the Soviet Union.

Briefly to remind ourselves of the heated controversy, in April 1989 Marshal Akhromeev had claimed that the Oka (SS-23) missile had a range of *less* than 500 kilometres and should thus be considered a short-range system. He had also asserted that 'its range was no secret to US representatives at the [INF] talks' and objected to United States plans to deploy a new missile, the Lance, with a range of close to 500 kilometres.[1172] Two weeks prior to the NATO summit, on 12-13 May, Shevardnadze had reiterated the viewpoint of the Soviet chief of staff when he visited Bonn in preparation of Gorbachev's visit. At a press conference, he deplored that NATO wanted to deploy a new missile with a range comparable to that of the Soviet SS-23 Oka missile, which was being abolished in accordance with the December 1987 Soviet-American INF treaty. He pointedly asked:

> Why, then, should we destroy the SS-23 missiles if the other side is creating and will deploy an analogous missile? By engaging in scholastic exercises one cannot resolve the problem. The fact is that there would be two identical types of missile. But whereas the Soviet one would be destroyed, the American one would be produced.[1173]

1172 'Takticheskie iadernye oruzhiia - preimuzhestvo ili balans?', *Pravda*, 19 April 1989.

1173 'Press-konferentsiia v Bonne,' *Pravda*, 14 May 1989.

When he was asked whether that statement should be interpreted in such a way that, if NATO were to take a decision on modernization, the Soviet Union would halt the withdrawal of the SS-23 and their destruction, he replied: 'One would have to think about this. Would it [after a decision by NATO to develop a follow-on system to Lance] make sense to destroy these [our] missiles? Or would it be possible that in that circumstance we would be forced to create new systems and respond in kind to the NATO decision?' Pressed further, he continued: 'We either will have to arrest the destruction of the SS-23 missiles or create new systems.'[1174]

Although Shevardnadze's reply was interpreted by members of the Western defense community as a 'throwback to cold war tactics' and 'blatant extortion',[1175] and despite the fact that such tactics in the past had often had a tendency to backfire, Genscher's determination to prevent an early SNF modernization decision prevailed at the Brussels summit.[1176] NATO was committing itself to 'partial reductions,' thereby implying that there was a minimum number of SNF that was non-negotiable. But since the existing Lance system was soon to become obsolete and further arms control and disarmament measures (including Bush's proposal for the limitation of Soviet and American troops in Europe to 275,000 officers and men) were being discussed, it was, as Genscher realized, highly likely that the Lance would never be modernized and that there would be a 'triple zero' solution for nuclear missiles.[1177] Undoubtedly, to conclude the consideration of this issue, the successful West German opposition to SNF modernization contributed significantly to the acceleration of the arms control and disarmament process in Europe and removed a major impediment to a productive Soviet-West German summit.

A third reason for the shift of priorities in Soviet policy on the German problem and, more generally, in Europe lay in the strengthening of the 'relationship of trust' between Kohl and Gorbachev that had been established in October 1988.[1178] To the detriment of an accurate understanding of in-

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1174 Ibid.

1175 Richard Perle, 'Moscow's Threat: A Bluff the West Should Call,' *International Herald Tribune*, 18 May 1989.

1176 In his memoirs, Genscher has described at length the circumstances and the dramatic proceedings at the Brussels summit; *Erinnerungen*, pp. 614-21.

1177 Ibid., pp. 618-19. The first two 'zeroes' were on intermediate-range and medium-range nuclear missiles.

1178 For the establishment of a 'relationship of trust' during Kohl's October 1988 visit to Moscow, see *above*, p. 326-27.

ternational affairs, political scientists often tend to downplay the importance of personality factors. One may suspect that this has something to do with the difficulty of measuring, or 'operationalizing', such intangible 'variables' as sympathy and empathy. Political leaders and diplomats, on the contrary, have generally been less averse to admitting their importance. In this writer's view, too, such factors matter a great deal. Judging from the personal accounts of the two leaders and their entourage, Gorbachev's opinion of Kohl substantially improved during and after his visit to West Germany in June 1989. This, in turn, affected his thinking and behaviour – as Gorbachev privately and publicly acknowledged. Concerning the latter, for instance, at the July 1990 press conference, where he and Kohl announced details of their agreement on the external aspects of German unification, he said that he (Gorbachev) considered the 'personal factor highly important' and that the agreement they were announcing would not have been possible if it had not been for the close relations that had developed between him and the German chancellor and also among other Soviet and German officials. After his visit to Bonn in June 1989, but before the rapid changes on German soil, he continued, a 'reserve' of trust and good will had been built, which had helped 'us deal responsibly and constructively' with the changes.[1179]

Concerning the former, the two leaders met privately on three occasions during Gorbachev's visit, twice at the chancellery and once at the chancellor's home.[1180] At their meeting in Kohl's villa on the banks of the Rhine, they talked extensively about their personal background and life, with mutual understanding facilitated by the fact that they are part of the genera-

1179 Joint press conference in Zheleznovodsk, in the northern Caucasus; 'Press konferentsiia M.S. Gorbacheva i G. Kolia', *Pravda*, 18 July 1990. Analytically, however, it is still an interesting problem to consider what came first, Gorbachev's realization of the expediency, if not political necessity, to establish a better personal rapport with Kohl or the 'establishment of trust' that led to a reorientation of the Kremlin leader's policies toward West Germany. In this writer's view, it was the former that came first. Furthermore, it would seem that distrust and suspicion in Gorbachev's view of Kohl was never far below the surface. An indication of this is his rapid return to decidedly negative perceptions after the chancellor's announcement of his Ten Points on 28 November 1989, when a furious Gorbachev (and Shevardnadze) turned the tables on the chancellor's Goebbels remarks and compared Kohl's behaviour with that of the Nazis; see *infra*, p. 548-49.

1180 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 40; Gorbachev, *Zhizn*', Vol. 2, p. 159.

tion that had experienced World War II. Gorbachev told Kohl about his childhood, his grandfather as a victim of Stalinism, his father's work on the collective farm, and his own experiences during the war, including the German occupation. Kohl reciprocated and told his guest about his own parents, his father having been drafted to the war, the allied air raids on his native Ludwigshafen and about his brother, who was killed at the front. After the conversation about both personal and political matters, when Gorbachev and his wife were leaving the chancellor's villa, they embraced each other. 'For me', Kohl wrote, 'this evening was a pivotal experience, and I believe for Gorbachev too.'[1181] Gorbachev, in his memoirs, remains non-committal about what *he* felt. This is presumably for the reason that he has been keen to dispel the notion that his policies on German unification were in any way governed by emotion rather than reason. However, there is nothing in his account that would contradict the favourable impression which the chancellor had received.

In contrast to the reticence about Kohl in his memoirs, Gorbachev is explicit on what he felt about von Weizsäcker. He writes that he understood why the German people had such great admiration for their president, considering his 'comprehensive knowledge, intelligence, natural poise and good will', attributes which contributed to the fact that, 'since that time, we have kept in contact and that our conversations each time became more sincere and characterized by more trust'.[1182]

It was, however, not only between the chancellor and the Kremlin leader and at the very top level that an atmosphere of friendship prevailed. The advisers on foreign policy to the two leaders and the two foreign ministers also built on their good previous contacts and strengthened their personal relationship.[1183]

The impact of personal experiences on Gorbachev's perceptions and behaviour can also be found in another dimension: the enthusiastic welcome he received from the German population and from labour union, business and public opinion leaders. In his memoirs, he reports:

> The program for the visit was extraordinarily varied. I had the opportunity to visit many Bundesländer and numerous cities and villages as well as to meet with politicians, entrepreneurs, artists, workers, and representatives of political parties and social groups. ... We also came in contact with the inhabitants

1181 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 47.
1182 Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 2, p. 156.
1183 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 627-32; interviews with Teltschik and Chernyaev.

> of the German capital. ... The scenes at the square of Bonn's city hall were truly unforgettable. In the street below there was an overflowing wave of well-wishers and people expressing their friendship. Calls and wishes of luck like, 'Gorby! Make love, not walls!' and 'Keep it up, Gorbachev!' accompanied us. As we stepped out onto the balcony of the City Hall, thunderous applause surged forth from the crowd.
> In the course of the visit, we also met with metal workers in a factory of the Hoesch corporation in Dortmund. When we stepped out of the car, we ended up in a row of thousands of people who welcomed us. An enormous factory room was filled to the last seat. People stood on an improvised parquet floor and on workbenches, climbed onto scaffolding and moving equipment and alternately lifted each other onto their shoulders.[1184]

Gorbachev summarizes these experiences by comparing them with those gained during his visit to West Germany fourteen years earlier, acknowledging that in June 1989 he was 'moved by the wave of warmth from these people who had received us so cordially and welcomed us so sincerely'.[1185]

It would seem that the encounters had impressed Gorbachev not only because they did not fit the stereotypes implanted in his mind. Speaking about a similarly warm welcome Gorbachev had received in Washington in December 1987, former American ambassador to Moscow Jack Matlock has observed that Gorbachev enjoyed the pomp and circumstance of power and thirsted for public acclaim. At home, to continue the ambassador's account, he was beginning to bridle at indications that his popularity was less than universal and to contain politicians like Yeltsin, who exhibited more charisma with people in the street than he. In Washington, as later in the capitals of Western Europe, he found what he was denied at home: worship of an adoring crowd. His evolving personal relationships with Reagan, Bush, Kohl, Thatcher, Mitterrand and other Western leaders reinforced the important insight that he no longer dealt with hostile forces that had to be managed, fended off or appeased. The focus shifted to how common interests could be served.[1186]

A fourth reason for the priority accorded to West Germany in Soviet policy in Europe after June 1989 was connected with the content of the talks, the agreements reached and the prospects for future cooperation. It

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1184 Gorbachev, *Zhizn*', Vol. 2, pp. 156-57.

1185 Ibid., p. 159.

1186 Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Autopsy of an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 152.

is not possible to prove but proper to conjecture that in his conversations with Gorbachev about the German problem, Kohl had struck a responsive chord. On a walk along the Rhine in the early morning hours on the third day of the visit, the German chancellor outlined his vision of a comprehensive reordering of Soviet-German relations and their codification in a Grand Treaty. Such a treaty, Kohl said, would be inadequate as long as Germany remained divided. The division of Germany was the most important impediment to an improvement in the relations among the two peoples. Gorbachev responded by reiterating the Soviet position about the division as being the logical result of a historic development. Kohl resumed the argument. Pointing to the Rhine, he said that the river symbolized history. A dam could be built across its path but the river would overflow and still find its ordained way to the sea. It was similar with German unity, which was sure to come. The only question was whether it should be addressed by the present generation or whether one should continue to wait, with all the problems that this would pose. The Germans would never reconcile themselves with the division. Gorbachev no longer contradicted.[1187] Although he failed to draw any practical conclusions, but considering what he had told Rykin fourteen years earlier, it would seem that he fundamentally agreed with the German chancellor.[1188]

As for the Grand Treaty, the outlines of its probable provisions were visible in the Joint Declaration issued at the end of the talks. In a similar document, the 1972 Basic Principles of Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, Washington had unwisely deferred to traditional Soviet language. The first principle of the agreement had stated that the United States and the Soviet Union would 'proceed from the common determination that in the nuclear age there is no alternative to conducting their mutual relations on the basis of peaceful coexistence'.[1189] Thus, on the face of it, the Nixon administration had agreed to class struggle as the governing principle in Soviet-American relations. West German negotiators in 1988-89, in contrast, succeeded in committing Moscow to several concepts and norms favoured by Bonn. As described above, this applied to the principle of self-determination. It was extended to the precedence of international law in domestic and international politics and included the

1187 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 43-44.
1188 See above, pp. 262. Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 43-44.
1189 *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 66 (26 June 1972), pp. 898-99. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger had negotiated the text of the Basic Principles.

West German concepts of *Gemeinsame Sicherheit* (common security) and *Europäische Friedensordnung* (framework, structure, or architecture of peace in Europe) which supplemented Gorbachev's idea of the Common European House.[1190] On the German problem, the Joint Declaration also contained language supporting Bonn's viewpoint. The document deplored that the European 'continent has been divided for decades' and that both countries considered it 'their paramount objective ... to contribute to overcoming the division of Europe'. In the Russian version, it also featured a terminological innovation conforming to West German preferences. In the first sentence, the declaration refers to the Federal Republic of Germany as *Federativnaia Respublika Germaniia*, rather than *Germanii*, the alteration implying that there is one single Germany – *Germaniia* – rather than two or more German entities.[1191]

As for a Grand Treaty and the comprehensive reordering of Soviet-German relations, perhaps their most important component was the idea of a significant expansion of Soviet-German economic cooperation and West German economic and financial assistance for the modernization of the Soviet economy.[1192] However, since this was a long-term proposition and depended on both West German private investors and traders to take risks as well as on the kind of radical structural reforms that Gorbachev was not as yet prepared to undertake, there was little the West German government could do beyond committing itself to short-term assistance (*Sofortmaßnahmen*) to help alleviate the acute supply problems in the Soviet Union.[1193] For the time being, cooperation in the economic and other spheres had to remain limited. What could be achieved was set forth in eleven agreements signed during Gorbachev's visit. They concerned the protection of German investments in the Soviet Union; the opening of cultural institutes; exchange programs involving scientists, youth, high school students and teachers; the training of qualified workers and management personnel in commerce and industry; joint measures against drug traffic;

1190 Text in Press and Information Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, *Bulletin*, No. 61 (15 June 1989). Several of the principles under this heading conformed to the New Thinking but these, in turn, were significantly influenced by West German, above all Social Democratic, concepts.

1191 'M.S. Gorbachev v FRG. Sovmestnoe zaiavlenie', *Izvestiia*, 15 June 1989.

1192 Interviews with Teltschik and Chernyaev.

1193 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 42.

information exchange on nuclear energy; and the opening of a 'hot line' – an encoded telefax connection – between Bonn and Moscow.

West Germany thus became the Soviet Union's most important partner in Europe. But this was not, it would seem, because of Gorbachev's personal preferences but because of objective conditions. His liaison with Kohl, to use a convenient metaphor, was primarily not one of the heart but of the mind.[1194] His true preference, one suspects, really lay with other European countries – with France, for instance. This is indicated by statements he made at the Warsaw Pact summit conference in Bucharest, on 7-8 July, shortly after his return from a visit to Paris 'W*e have to devote primary attention to France*', he told the assembled party chiefs. 'That is a country of developed political thinking and with a developed culture. France is listened to not only in Europe but also in many other extremely important regions of the world.'[1195] The fact that West Germany nevertheless had become the Soviet Union's most important partner in Europe in practice meant that Gorbachev was prepared to cooperate more closely with that country than with any other in Europe, including East Germany. Cooperation with West Germany, however, meant within the framework of two separate German states. It did not mean that he accepted Kohl's idea of actively working toward ending the division of Germany. This was shown, among other things, by continuing Soviet-West German differences over the Berlin problem. Two agreements had been ready for signature at the summit, one on maritime shipping and the other on shipping in internal waters, but both failed to be signed because Moscow, to underline its legal position that West Berlin was a separate political entity, insisted on the city flying a separate flag. This demand was rejected by the Federal government.

The thinly veiled euphoria in Bonn about the Joint Statement and about having committed Moscow in that document to the idea that overcoming the division of Europe was in the paramount interest of both West Germany and the Soviet Union would have dissipated somewhat if the West German negotiators had known what Gorbachev told Honecker only two

1194 This is to reinforce the point made above about Gorbachev's vacillating perception of Kohl, see p. 548.

1195 Speech by Gorbachev at the Warsaw Pact summit conference in Bucharest, 7-8 July 1989, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2/2336 (italics mine).

weeks after its publication. In private conversation, the Kremlin leader assured his East German counterpart that there had been no horse trading and that the Soviet Union had made no concessions. He had sensed that attempts had been made to set him and Honecker as well as the GDR and the Soviet Union against each other. In response, he had emphasized that the Soviet Union maintained close relations with the GDR but that it also wanted to improve relations with West Germany. He had portrayed this as being quite normal. Prospects for an improvement of Soviet-West German relations were significant if the transformation process in the Soviet Union were to be successful. As for the problems raised by Kohl (that is, German unification), he had replied that history had decided. Nothing could be changed about that. The course of history might change; one would have to wait and see. However, one always had to proceed from existing realities.[1196]

If what Chernyaev has stated is correct, namely, that – in the wake of Gorbachev's visit – West Germany was to be given priority in Soviet policy towards Germany and that Bonn rather than East Berlin was to be the main partner for the construction of a new Europe, nothing was said about this to Honecker. In the private talks, Gorbachev also did not attach any special significance to the Joint Declaration. In fact, he failed to mention that document. No wonder, then, that Honecker acted as if everything was back to normal in Soviet-East German relations. 'Comrade Honecker emphasized,' the transcript says, 'that we consider the complimentary words [sic] which Comrade Gorbachev uttered in Bonn about the GDR and its policies to be an endorsement of the line pursued thus far [by the GDR] and an encouragement unwaveringly to adhere to it.'[1197]

In view of the serious differences in political philosophy and policy between the GDR and the USSR, it may almost seem absurd to raise the question whether Honecker was simply speaking tongue in cheek, being perfectly conscious of the lack of Soviet endorsement for his policy line,

1196 Transcript (*Niederschrift*) of talks between Honecker and Gorbachev in Moscow on 28 June 1989, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2A/3228. Kohl had indeed raised the issue of Honecker's recalcitrance and commented that it was now easier to talk with Moscow than with East Berlin; Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 41-43.

1197 Transcript (*Niederschrift*) of talks between Honecker and Gorbachev of 28 June 1989. There is no evidence, however, that in his talks with the chancellor Gorbachev had said anything complimentary about East Germany.

or whether he genuinely believed that he had Soviet support. Controversial as the proposition may be, it would seem that on balance he was more sincere in his belief than ironic, let alone sarcastic. Until that time, in all the private conversations recorded in the East German archives, Gorbachev had *never* directly criticized Honecker or his policies, and he would continue to refrain from open criticism until the very end of the Honecker regime. He had, contrary to that, been *complimentary* about both the East German leader and East German policies (although not in conversation with Kohl), even deferential. The objective divergence of Soviet and East German policies could be, and in all likelihood *was*, interpreted by Honecker along the lines of what is good for the Soviet goose had already been digested by the East German gander − Gorbachev had consistently encouraged this very notion − and that the changes that he considered to be bad for the Soviet Union should not be imitated by East Germany. In the circumstances, it is hard to blame him for believing that Soviet endorsement of his policies should unambiguously be reiterated at the forthcoming celebrations on the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the GDR. Gorbachev did indeed repeat some praise but the celebrations nevertheless turned into a *marche funèbre* for the Honecker regime. They were also another step forward along the path towards the collapse of East Germany and the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe.

2. The Demise of the Honecker Regime

The anniversary celebrations from 6 to 8 October and Gorbachev's visit to East Berlin on that occasion could not have failed but take place in an atmosphere of heightened tension and apprehension. From the Honecker regime's perspective, several problems had to be solved. There was, first, the problem of those wanting to leave the country, the *Republikflüchtige*. In response to the Hungarian government's decision to let East Germans leave without valid travel documents, the East German authorities had at first severely restricted travel to Hungary. But this had failed to produce the – from the GDR's perspective – desired effect of closing all loopholes: the flow of people intent on leaving the country was simply diverted to Western, primarily West German, embassies. That concerned, above all, the Federal Republic's embassy in Budapest and Prague but also in Warsaw and Bonn's diplomatic representation in East Berlin. In the Hungarian capital, thousands of East Germans had scaled the walls of the West Ger-

man embassy and found themselves stranded on its muddy grounds. In principle, Honecker was averse to abandoning the official East German position that the 'illegal presence of some [sic] GDR citizens in the representations of the FRG can only be interpreted as blackmail;' that there was 'no special road (*Sonderweg)* around GDR emigration laws;' and that the only thing the East German government would be prepared to do was to 'give assurances that those who return will not be punished'.[1198] But considering that the festivities in East Berlin could be marred by an unresolved and embarrassing problem, he relented. At the end of September, that is, only little more than a week prior to the beginning of the celebrations, he yielded to West German pressures and let the East Germans leave Czechoslovakia – by special trains and on a circuitous route from Prague *via Dresden* to Hof in Bavaria in order to convey the notion that the East Germans were leaving their country legally. By that time, since the beginning of the summer, about 45,000 East Germans had left the GDR, legally, semi-legally or illegally. On 3 October, the GDR authorities attempted to prevent a repetition of East Germans scrambling into the Prague embassy by closing the border with Czechoslovakia. However, unless there was a fundamental resolution of the problem, either by more far-reaching East German restrictions and repression or by a rapid and comprehensive liberalization of emigration laws, it was obvious that the exodus would continue.[1199]

Second, the official celebrations were to coincide with unofficial demonstrations scheduled to take place in East Berlin on 7 October. The unauthorized demonstrations, held on the seventh of every month, were also commemorative. But they were not designed to celebrate GDR achievements but to remind the ruling party of the electoral fraud which the demonstrators were convinced the party had committed in the May

1198 Protocol of the meeting between GDR state secretary and first deputy minister of foreign affairs, Herbert Krolikowski, and the chief of the Federal Republic's chancellery's office, Rudolf Seiters, on 18 August 1989 in East Berlin, Central Party Archives, Büro Axen, IV 2/2035.

1199 For details about the East German refugee problem, the West German pressures on East Germany to consent to their exodus from the embassies and Soviet reactions: for primary sources, see Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 643-45, 650-51; Horn, *Freiheit, die ich meine*, p. 327; for secondary sources, see Elizabeth Pond, *Beyond the Wall: Germany's Road to Unification*, A Twentieth Century Fund Book (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1993), pp. 97-98; and Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 73-76.

1989 local elections. Krenz at that time had been chairman of the electoral commission. On 9 October, the by then equally traditional demonstrations held every Monday of the week in Leipzig (*Montagsdemonstrationen*) were also planned to take place. Restiveness and rumours abounded. Krenz, the SED Central Committee secretary in charge of security, was to be back in time for the celebrations from a visit to China. Members of the democratic opposition, as noted *supra*, feared that he would return as an advocate of a 'Chinese solution' to the East German regime's troubles and that a crackdown on demonstrations and dissent would begin as soon as the anniversary celebrations were over.[1200]

For Honecker, the celebrations were of symbolic importance to show once again how far the GDR had travelled since 1949. They presented an opportunity to remind his detractors that the state had weathered several crises before and that, if need be, it would overcome many more. Yet this time Honecker faced three problems that were linked with external difficulties: deterioration of his health; increasing intra-party rivalries and dissatisfaction; and a widening gap between the party and the people. The East German leader, then 77 years of age, had undergone surgery in the preceding year and in the period from 12 August to 25 September 1989 had been absent from public life for health reasons. His political health had also deteriorated, both inside the party and the bloc. In these circumstances, he and the dogmatic party stalwarts needed Soviet support more than ever. But they were unsure whether they would receive it. Such support was perhaps not unlikely. Gorbachev may have been warned and chastened by the developments in Poland and Hungary.

For Gorbachev, too, much was at stake in the context of the visit. The first question that had to be decided was whether to accept Honecker's official invitation to attend the anniversary celebrations. The SED chief had put pressure on him to attend. In private conversation, on 28 June 1989 in Moscow, Honecker had explained:

> In the GDR, we now focus on the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the republic on 7 October. We want to celebrate this jubilee together with our allies and friends all over the world, whose support, empathy, and solidarity we have felt in all these years of socialist construction. More than seventy delegations from socialist countries, fraternal and avant-garde parties, and national-democratic movements are expected in Berlin. *We would be pleased if we*

1200 For the discussion of East German fears, the Stasi's plans to use force, and the role of the Soviet armed forces, see above, pp. 436-37.

> *could, on that occasion, welcome Comrade Gorbachev at the head of the delegation of the Soviet Union.* One could arrange things so that Comrade Gorbachev could, with his delegation, before and after the celebrations, visit a few important places in the GDR.[1201]

Gorbachev was non-committal. He thanked Honecker for the invitation and stated that, 'in principle, participation at the fortieth anniversary would be very desirable. [We will] think about it.'[1202] Honecker seemed to be taken aback by this tepid response and reiterated his invitation. Indeed, he said,

> one should think carefully about it; [the event] will have great resonance in the GDR and in the whole world. ... The participation of Comrade Gorbachev would, in effect, be [putting] a seal [of approval] on socialism on German soil [and on the GDR] as being a cornerstone of peace and socialism in Central Europe. It would at the same time be an expression of solidarity with restructuring in the Soviet Union.[1203]

The Soviet leader still refused to commit himself and continued to do so throughout the summer. In mid-September it seems that Honecker, through CPSU stalwart Ligachev, tried to force Gorbachev's hand. Ligachev, as noted, had been shunted away from central issues to a political siding (the Central Committee's agricultural commission) but was unwilling to reconcile himself to a secondary role in the affairs of state. On 12 September, he travelled to East Berlin, purportedly to discuss agricultural issues but more likely to shore up the SED's sagging morale. He spoke warmly of the Soviet Union's 'forty years of indestructible friendship' with East Germany, went on to say that Gorbachev and the USSR condemned the provocative West German campaign against East Germany and, apparently without the Soviet leader's knowledge and permission, announced that Gorbachev would visit East Berlin to participate in the anniversary celebrations. On the following day, a Soviet foreign ministry spokesman limited himself to acknowledging that the visit was 'perfectly

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1201 Transcript (*Niederschrift*) of the talks between Honecker and Gorbachev on 28 June 1989 in Moscow, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2A/3228 (direct and indirect speech is used in the original; italics mine).

1202 Ibid. (indirect speech.)

1203 Ibid. (indirect speech).

possible' and said that 'a delegation at the highest level' had not been ruled out.[1204]

The reason for Gorbachev's reluctance to commit himself was rooted in a dilemma. Not to attend could have been interpreted as an affront and a signal that Honecker no longer had his confidence. Even worse from the Soviet leader's vantage point, it could have been regarded as a sign that he had written off the GDR altogether – a message which he was not prepared to convey. But attendance could have been misinterpreted as endorsement for Honecker, which he was equally determined to avoid. Reformist forces in East Germany, both inside and outside the party, expected the Soviet visitor to exert pressure on Honecker, preferably publicly, to change his policies and persuade him to step from office.

Gorbachev's ultimate decision was influenced by advice provided by the CC's International Department that he should attend but make it a point to talk not only to Honecker but also to meet with the whole East German leadership.[1205] The officials of the department thought, correctly, that Gorbachev had 'conducted his educational work with the East German *primus* only' who, in turn, had 'not been telling his colleagues the whole truth'.[1206] They advised him, therefore, that in closed session with the entire top SED leadership he should, more forcefully than previously, make a case for comprehensive reform in East Germany.[1207] The difficulty of charting a course between the Scylla of attendance and putative endorsement of Honecker and the Charybdis of blunt criticism and destabilization of East Germany was apparent in last minute changes in the preparation for the visit: 'The size of the delegation was significantly reduced, the schedule of the meetings altered, and language somewhat more

1204 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 72; author interviews as well as the interview conducted by Condoleezza Rice (September 1994) with Chernyaev. − The agro-business part of Ligachev's trip was tersely reported by *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 13 September 1989. Western diplomats said that Ligachev had participated in the weekly SED Politburo meeting and that he had admonished his East German colleagues that, even if they were not to institute Gorbachev-style reforms, they should at least try to respond better than before to the needs and grievances of the people; *Die Welt*, 14 September 1989. − On the conservative to reactionary outlook of Ligachev and his demotion see pp. 406-7.

1205 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 484 (italics mine).

1206 Ibid.

1207 Interviews with Zagladin and Rykin.

critical of East German policies included for his meetings with Honecker and the SED leadership.'[1208]

Considering the extraordinary importance of the anniversary celebrations, it is appropriate to provide some detail, beginning with a reconstruction of the schedule of events. On Friday morning, 6 October, Gorbachev would arrive and be welcomed by the East German leadership at East Berlin's Schönefeld airport. He would then travel by car to Niederschönhausen palace where the Soviet delegation was to stay. In the afternoon, the celebrations would officially begin with a gala meeting in the Palast der Republik (Palace of the Republic), with public speeches to be delivered, among others, by Gorbachev and Honecker. In the evening, there would be an officially sponsored *Fackelzug*, or torch-light procession. The Soviet delegation would then return to Niederschönhausen, with opportunities provided for its members to relax and prepare for meetings on the following day. On Saturday, 7 October, the celebrations were to continue with the laying of wreaths at Treptow cemetery; a military parade in downtown East Berlin; private talks between Honecker and Gorbachev and a meeting with the participation of the two party leaders, the Soviet delegation, and the full and candidate members of the SED Politburo, both to take place in Niederschönhausen palace; a reception and dinner later in the afternoon; and Gorbachev's departure to Schönefeld airport for a plane scheduled to depart for Moscow at 8:00 p.m. The impression which various aspects of the events made on the main protagonists can now be reconstructed with some confidence from archival materials, memoirs, and interviews.

Gorbachev's perceptions of political conditions in East Germany began to be shaped on the car trip from the airport to the palace. The streets along the way were lined with people, many of whom young, who were enthusiastically and demonstratively welcoming the Soviet president with shouts of 'Gorby! Gorby!' The outburst of popular enthusiasm visibly annoyed Honecker who sat stone-faced in the car next to the Soviet guest who noticed that his host felt quite uncomfortable. Along the way to Niederschönhausen, Falin saw only one placard supportive of Honecker, carried by a middle-aged man, which read: '*Mach weiter so, Erich*!' (Carry on, Erich!). The outbursts of popular enthusiasm were repeated during the evening torch light procession, despite the fact that the 40,000 to

1208 Interviews with Grigoriev (the *verbatim* quote) and Tsipko..

50,000 participants had been carefully selected from party activists and affiliated organizations, notably the communist youth organization (FDJ).[1209]

In his speech at the gala meeting in the Palace of the Republic on 6 October, Honecker defiantly repeated formulas that confirmed to everyone present that far-reaching reforms were not on his agenda. 'Forty years of the GDR have meant forty years of heroic labour, forty years of successful struggle for the construction of our socialist republic and the welfare of our people,' was the main theme pursued by him.[1210] In the social sphere, everyone in the GDR had his place, independent of *Weltanschauung* and religion. Socialism, with its humanistic aspirations, was creating space for the development of the personality of each and everyone. The GDR had risen to be one of the top ten industrial nations in the world and was strengthening its economic potential by the introduction of modern technologies. The country had enhanced its international prestige and influence and become a member of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. One hundred and thirty-five states had established diplomatic relations with it. The GDR was also a reliable guarantee against neo-Nazism and chauvinism and would remain firmly anchored in the Warsaw Pact. No one could doubt that East Germany, as the other socialist states, would step over the threshold of the year 2000 in the certain knowledge that the future belongs to socialism. Honecker's few references to the Soviet Union almost exclusively concerned economic and technological cooperation. 'In the meetings I have held in the past few years with our friend and comrade, Mikhail Gorbachev,' the possibilities for a more productive division of labour and cooperation had been 'ever more deeply explored' and 'corresponding steps' had been initiated.[1211]

Gorbachev, in his public speech, struck fairly traditional and conservative notes. He rejected accusations that the Soviet Union had been responsible for the division of Germany and Europe. He reprimanded West Germany for allegedly seizing on the reforms to 'reanimate' dreams of a Ger-

1209 The description of events and of Gorbachev's observations and reactions according to Gorbatschow, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 934-35, and Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 484.

1210 'Ansprache des Generalsekretärs des ZK der SED und Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates der DDR, Erich Honecker, auf der Festveranstaltung zum 40. Jahrestag der Gründung der DDR', *Neues Deutschland*, 9 October 1989.

1211 Ibid.

man *Reich*. With the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries arrayed behind him, Gorbachev assailed demands to dismantle the Berlin wall.

> We are constantly called upon to liquidate this or that division. We often have to hear, 'Let the USSR get rid of the Berlin wall, and then we'll believe in its peaceful intentions.' We don't idealize the order that has settled on Europe. But the fact is that until now the recognition of the post-war reality has insured peace on the continent. Every time the West has tried to reshape the post-war map of Europe it has meant the worsening of the international situation.[1212]

In another indication of support for the GDR and of his opposition to putting the German problem on the international agenda, he thought that he 'should tell our Western partners that matters relating to the German Democratic Republic are *decided not in Moscow, but in [East] Berlin*'.[1213]

He alluded only slightly to East German problems, and this was coupled with reassertion of the Soviet position of non-interference in the internal affairs of socialist countries and parties. 'The GDR,' he said, 'of course has its problems that demand solution. They arise from the internal demands of a society moving towards new horizons and the gradual process of modernization and renewal in which the socialist world now finds itself.' But, he added, the East German communists 'will know how to find answers to the questions on the agenda of the day in cooperation with all the forces of society.'[1214] Another mild allusion to the necessity of change in the GDR was his remark that 'history has its own laws of development (*zakonomernosti*) and its own tempo and rhythm determined by

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1212 Gorbachev's speech at the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the GDR in East Berlin on 6 October 1989, 'Prazdnik sotsializma na nemetskoi zemle. Rech' M.S. Gorbacheva', *Pravda*, 7 October 1989.

1213 Ibid. (italics mine).

1214 Ibid. The allusion to East German problems that demanded solution had travelled a strange and tortuous path through Soviet bureaucratic channels. Perhaps unbeknownst to Gorbachev, it was suggested by a *West German political leader*. Shortly prior to Gorbachev's departure to East Berlin, Prime Minister Björn Engholm (SPD) of the Land Schleswig-Holstein, on a visit to Moscow had proposed to CC advisor and German expert Portugalov that Gorbachev include in his GDR anniversary speech a statement supportive of the GDR's putative reformists. For reasons that are unclear, Portugalov asked Tsipko to ask Shakhnazarov to suggest it to Gorbachev. Portugalov may already have begun to suspect that Falin's standing with Gorbachev had declined and that Shakhnazarov had a better chance to win Gorbachev's ear; interview with Tsipko.

the ripening of objective and subjective factors of development. To ignore this is to invite further problems.'[1215] The potential impact of the latter allusion was limited, however. Gorbachev had not referred specifically to East Germany – his remark had prefaced the part dealing with perestroika in the Soviet Union – and 'ripening' was by then a well-known Gorbachevian metaphor for internal inaction and external non-intervention.

The evening in Niederschönhausen presented the opportunity for walks in the park and for Gorbachev and his delegation to review the events of the day. The Soviet leader had been conscious of difficulties in East Germany. But he had apparently underestimated the width of the gap that separated the SED from the population. 'What shall we do?', he asked. 'We can't force the people to be silent. Honecker is beside himself. If he can't manage to get along with his own party activists, one can well imagine the mood among the masses. There is something we didn't under-stand.'[1216] The remarks were made to fellow party members Falin and Shakhnazarov, who consoled themselves by thinking that Gorbachev's presence in Berlin was a guarantee of sorts to the effect that the dissatisfaction with the regime would not take aggressive forms and rupture the political framework.[1217] They also expected that the following day would bring some 'clarification' as to what could or should be done. If at all, such clarification would be obtained in two meetings, the first restricted to Honecker and Mittag on the East German side, and Gorbachev and members of his delegation on the Soviet side,[1218] the second with the entire SED Politburo.

The meetings of 7 October indeed brought clarification but not of the kind desired by the Soviet delegation. According to the East German transcript of the meeting between Honecker and Gorbachev, the Soviet leader continued to take a conciliatory and deferential attitude, saying that

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1215 Ibid.

1216 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 485.

1217 Ibid.

1218 Günter Mittag, *Um jeden Preis* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1991), p. 18. There is, for the present purposes, a rather inconsequential controversy as to whether Mittag was present. Mittag has written: 'I participated in both talks which Gorbachev conducted on 7 October in Berlin – initially with Erich Honecker and then with the whole Politburo.' Falin (*Erinnerungen*, p. 485) confirms that Mittag was present at both meetings but Schabowski (*Der Absturz*, p. 241; *Das Politbüro*, pp. 73-74), based on what he was told by a TASS correspondent, denies that he was.

> what unites us today [is] not accidental but based on firm principles. Everything else are specific questions. Occasionally, some problems arise about domestic conditions and foreign policy. We need constant exchanges about that. I find that to be normal. We understand each other better now than before, and that gives us the possibility better to discharge our role and responsibility. [We] harbour no suspicion towards other countries [and our] relations are characterized by *mutual trust*. We are able to speak of mature relations between our peoples and states.[1219]

After this blatant misrepresentation of the actual state of affairs in Soviet-East German relations and some platitudes about the difficulties of socialist transformation, Gorbachev cautiously alluded to the desirability or expediency of unspecified change in the GDR. These allusions were preceded and followed by complimentary remarks about Honecker's public speech of the preceding day. He (Gorbachev) was 'very pleased' with that speech because it had 'clearly shown the path travelled by the GDR and very convincingly demonstrated [the GDR's] success' and also because it had 'honestly and correctly stated what needed to be done'. He also wanted to say in a spirit of

> friendship that [I] am pleased that the sights have been directed towards the future. There is no need on a day like this to develop these ideas further but [I] have understood this to mean that the SED will deal with [them] shortly after the celebrations, on the road towards the Twelfth Party Congress [to be held on 15-19 May 1990]. The fact that concerns, that had recently arisen, had been dealt with proved the necessity and accuracy of the ideas of E. Honecker. E. Honecker and the party should take the initiative lest demagogues suggested other ideas. *From [my] own experience [I] know that one must not be too late*.[1220]

The remainder of his remarks again addressed problems of transformation in the Soviet Union.

In his reply, Honecker reiterated the themes he had struck in his official speech about friendship between the GDR and the USSR, new life that had sprouted from the ruins of World War II and content citizens who now had running water, showers, and baths. He boasted yet again about East

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1219 Transcript (*Niederschrift*) of the meeting between Honecker and Gorbachev of 7 October 1989 in East Berlin, SED Politburo, Central Party Archives, J IV, 2/2.035/60 (direct speech, italics mine).

1220 Ibid. (indirect speech, italics mine). The Eleventh Party Congress was held in 1986. The Twelfth was originally scheduled to be take place in 1991 but, in 1989, was rescheduled to 15-19 May 1990 but because of the collapse of the SED was never held.

German progress in microelectronics and plants which had achieved an astonishing increase in labour productivity of between 300 and 700 percent as a result of the introduction of new technology. 'The GDR,' he concluded the portions of the speech dealing with internal issues, 'is a modern industrial state with a high research potential.'

What about problems? To the extent that they existed, perhaps with the exception of the activity of the churches, they all had an external origin. They were due, in Honecker's view, to a sharpening of the class struggle.[1221] First, there were economic pressures. Chancellor Kohl had declared that Bonn would extend economic assistance to the GDR only if it embarked on reform. He (Honecker) had rejected corresponding offers because the GDR refused to accept any conditionality. Bonn and Washington, however, had a broad agenda and in their economic strategy were concentrating their efforts on Hungary. Kohl had offered to extend a credit of DM 500 million to that country if it opened its borders and Bush had tied his credit offer to the election of a new party leadership in Budapest.

Second, there was the issue of open borders, a topic that Honecker had introduced when he had explained Kohl's credit offer. He complained that the West German chancellor had the same aim as Reagan, who (in June 1987, at the Brandenburg Gate) had demanded not only the abolition of borders between the GDR and the FRG but in all of Europe. The Hungarian border issue, he thought, was particularly complicated. Seven million GDR citizens annually visited Czechoslovakia and many vacationers heading for (the Black Sea coasts in) Bulgaria and Romania travelled through Hungary. This 'forced us temporarily to stop visa-free travel to Czechoslovakia'.

Third, there were the military-political pressures. NATO had scheduled manoeuvres with a planned participation of 250,000 troops. On the basis of previous such exercises and of documents in the possession of the GDR he was able to state that alleged '"erosive tendencies"' in socialist countries were meant to serve as a pretext 'to deal a blow to the GDR and the USSR'.

Fourth, in line with his past complaints to Gorbachev about the unpleasant necessity for GDR to defend itself on two fronts, he incongruously agreed 'with the CPSU that no more ground should be yielded to demagogues, since such demagogues have their say in Soviet newspapers, too'.

1221 The ordering and numbering of the issues is the author's, not Honecker's.

He also emphasized the crucial importance of strengthening the Soviet communist party so that it could cope with the transformation process in that country.

Finally, Honecker's *exposé* included some gratuitous and injurious remarks about supply problems in the Soviet Union. The background to the remarks was his 28-30 June 1989 visit to Magnitogorsk, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the city's foundation. The city administration had invited him to take part in an excursion in order to show him something about the living conditions of the people. He himself had not accepted the invitation, he said, but the comrades accompanying him had done so. When they had returned they had reported to him what they had seen. He then commented to Gorbachev and the members of the Soviet delegation present in the meeting: '*It [is] incomprehensible that, despite voluminous production, salt, soap, flour and other things have disappeared from the shops.*'[1222]

There can be little doubt that the exchange was considered artificial and unproductive by both sides. This was immediately obvious even to outsiders. An East German television correspondent reported that she had been asked to cover the press conference that Gorbachev and Honecker were scheduled to hold after their meeting. However,

> a press spokesman appeared and announced that there would be no briefing. Shortly thereafter Honecker came out alone. With his hands in his pockets, he went across the park to the Politburo meeting [with Gorbachev] that was to become so famous later. Then Gorbachev came out, also alone. I clearly understood: This is it. There will be no perestroika in the GDR.[1223]

The subsequent meeting between Honecker and Gorbachev in the presence of the full and candidate members of the SED Politburo and the Sovi-

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1222 Ibid., (indirect speech, italics mine). According to Falin's recollections (*Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 486), Honecker said that 'the shops were lacking even salt and matches'. Falin, however, while generally rendering the content and atmosphere of the meetings accurately, confuses the sequence of events. He ascribes much of what was said in the first − more restricted − meeting, including Honecker's remarks on the supply problems in Magnitogorsk, to the second session. The transcripts of both meetings clarify that Honecker made this comment in the restricted meeting. Falin has acknowledged that his account is based on memory, not on notes he took.

1223 As quoted by Maksimichev, *Rekviem po GDR*, p. 47.

et delegation was essentially a replay of the more restricted session.[1224] But there were also some important differences. Gorbachev's allusions to the necessity of change in the GDR were somewhat more forceful. Honecker refrained from reiterating the notion of the 'sharpening class struggle' and chose not to repeat the review of internal problems caused by external interference. Gorbachev again spoke first, for a full for fifty minutes 'in the extraordinarily appealing way so typical of him',[1225] as participants were to state later, 'coherently, convincingly, and emotionally'.[1226] He paid homage to the achievements of the GDR and its positive role in the socialist community, in Europe and in the world. He complimented the East German communists, who had given everything so that the dream of the working class, which had inspired several generations of Germany's working people, could assume concrete form. The SED could now justifiably have a feeling of satisfaction. Turning to Soviet-East German relations, he still asserted: '*For us, the German Democratic Republic is the most important partner and ally. This provides the guideline in our policy.*'[1227] The time horizon for the continuation of a Soviet-East German special relationship at the state and party levels had to be measured not in years but in centuries. '*We have talked about this [and other matters] with Comrade Erich Honecker and realized that we are in complete agreement [sic] as regards the assessment of processes occurring in our countries and in the socialist world as a whole*.'[1228]

To the participants in the meeting it looked as if there was going to be no end to the praise of East German achievements and not even a hint to the serious differences between the two leaders and parties. This was not to be. By, in essence, reinterpreting Honecker's public speech, he attempt-

1224 Stenographic record (*Niederschrift*) of the meeting between Honecker and Gorbachev on 7 October 1989 in East Berlin, SED Politburo, Central Party Archives, J IV, 2/2.035/60. The meeting lasted from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

1225 Schabowski, *Das Politbüro*, p. 74; id., *Der Absturz*, p. 241. Schabowski used the term '*sympathisch*' which is often erroneously rendered as 'sympathetically'. It has, however, nothing to do with the expression of sympathy or condolence and should, as here, be translated as 'appealing'.

1226 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 486.

1227 Stenographic record (*Niederschrift*) of the meeting between Honecker and Gorbachev on 7 October 1989 in East Berlin, SED Politburo, Central Party Archives, J IV, 2/2.035/60 (italics mine).

1228 Ibid. (italics mine).

ed to commit him and the SED leader to embark on comprehensive change:

> The question arises, of course: What next? What Comrade Erich Honecker said in his speech [yesterday] in reply to this question naturally could not be complete. This was, in fact, only an anniversary address, in which he expressed very important thoughts also for the long term. What was dealt with only briefly was the necessity of further thorough and fundamental changes in society, its basis, superstructure, and democracy, with the emphasis on a more comprehensive inclusion of people in the processes that are occurring. I have concluded this from the fact that work for the next Party Congress [the Twelfth in May 1990] is in full progress – a party congress that will have to be a turning point in the development of the country and that will have to determine the perspectives of the further development of society. It was very important for me to hear this.

There had, of course, been nothing in Honecker's public address about fundamental change or any turning point in the development of the GDR, and to that extent Gorbachev's remarks, although they did not contain direct criticism of the Honecker regime for its failure to outline a reform program, can be regarded as a fairly strong appeal for change. The appeal was strengthened by saying (as he had, indeed, several times before), that he had 'just told Erich Honecker that it will be easier for you to carry out transformations because you don't have such [high] tensions in the socio-economic area [as we do in the Soviet Union]'. Furthermore, after a detailed discussion of transformation problems in the USSR, he repeated his philosophical statement about the necessity of change but again without linking it to the GDR: *'If we were to remain behind, history would punish us immediately.'*[1229] And later, in reference to the demise of the communist parties in Poland and Hungary, he said: *'If the party does not react to history, it [the party] will be condemned.'*[1230] He concluded his speech with

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1229 '*Wenn wir zurückbleiben, bestraft uns das Leben sofort.'* The Russian *zhizn'* and German *Leben* – literally 'life' – have been rendered here throughout as 'history'.

1230 Ibid. (italics mine). The aphorism of 'Those who are late will be punished by history' has come to assume an almost mythical quality. This memorable phrase came to be widely disseminated. In one form or another, Gorbachev did, indeed, use it, both in private conversation with Honecker on more than one occasion but also publicly. For instance, on 6 October 1989, at the Memorial for the Victims of Fascism and Militarism, at the Neue Wache, in Berlin he said: 'I believe that dangers are lurking only for those, who do not react to history. (*Ich glaube, Gefahren lauern nur auf jene, die nicht auf das Leben reagieren)*. In the Russian

an appeal and a promise: 'We are ready to act jointly with you, to cooperate. We are open to everything, without reservation.'[1231]

Honecker had listened to Gorbachev's speech with a 'slightly reddish face and, perhaps to be polite, cut a contorted smile.'[1232] In a voice that was faint but more high-pitched than usual, he expressed gratitude for what Gorbachev had said. Without hinting at the political problems in East Germany and the disintegrating bloc, he again lectured on the country's achievements in microelectronics and space technology. There was now a deafening silence in the room. Gorbachev turned around to members in his delegation. With a forced smile and puzzled look he uttered a 'sss', perhaps a short substitute for: 'Well, comrades, that's it then. There is nothing more to say.'[1233]

There was a brief exchange immediately after this meeting between Gorbachev and Polish communist leaders Mieczyslaw Rakowski and General Jaruzelski. The Soviet leader told them: 'Well, the German comrades

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original available on *Youtube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYbDkZX-oo5A. – The actual wording, however, was not used by Gorbachev but created by the correspondents of the German press agency (DPA) and Associated Press (AP), Jürgen Metkemeyer and Heinz Joachim Schöttes. Gorbachev's press spokesman, Gennadi Gerasimov, had appeared shortly after the Gorbachev-Honecker meeting and, according to the correspondents, used the dictum in some 'complex construction'. They then made what they considered to be the most appropriate translation which was then, at 6:30 p.m. on 7 October, carried by DPA and AP ('Gorbatschow hat den berühmten Satz nie gesagt', *Welt.de*, 6 October 2014, http://www.welt.de/geschichte/article132968291/Gorbatschow-hat-den-beruehmten-Satz-nie-gesagt.html). – Gerasimov apparently liked that rendering of his statement and used the exact wording in an interview on Radio GDR II, 19 October 1989. − Gorbachev later denied that his remark was meant to apply to Honecker and the GDR. When Krenz, in his capacity as new party leader, visited Moscow on 1 November 1989 to coordinate policies with the Soviet Union, he conveyed 'cordial greetings from all of the comrades of the Politburo of the CC of the SED' and expressed gratitude for the talks he (Gorbachev) had held with the full Politburo, in which 'many things had been mentioned,' and that this applied 'above all to the remark that those being late would be punished by history.' Gorbachev interrupted him and said that in making this remark he '*had really talked about himself*'; transcript of the talks between Krenz and Gorbachev, SED Politburo, Central Party Archives, IV, 2/1/704, p. 3 of the typed transcript.

1231 Stenographic record (*Niederschrift*) of the meeting between Honecker and Gorbachev on 7 October 1989.

1232 Schabowski, *Das Politbüro*, p. 74.

1233 Ibid., pp. 74-75; id., *Der Absturz*, pp. 241-42.

are optimists, and they have interesting concepts.' But he failed to explain what he meant, pointing instead to the ceiling of the room to indicate that the Stasi had probably planted listening devices and that it would be inopportune to discuss matters in detail.[1234] There were also brief exchanges between Gerasimov and Schabowski, and between Falin and Krenz, in the course of which the East Germans expressed their disappointment with Honecker's speech and gave cryptic assurances that matters in East Germany would take their inevitable course, that is, presumably, that the replacement of the top leader was imminent.[1235] The subsequent dinner confirmed that Honecker was unrepentant and perhaps even determined to embarrass and humiliate Gorbachev. The seating order at table number one placed Gorbachev next to Ceaușescu, whom Gorbachev despised.[1236] PLO leader Yasir Arafat, too, was seated at that table, as was Krenz.[1237]

Truth and Consequences

The visit to East Berlin made a deep and lasting impression on the Soviet participants. Disappointment, disbelief, frustration and resignation were their main reactions. In his memoirs, Gorbachev writes that

> my careful attempts to convince [Honecker] of the necessity of not delaying the start of reform in the country as well as in the party led to no concrete results whatsoever. Each time, I ran into a wall of incomprehension. After our last meeting in October 1989, when I was taking part in the celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the GDR, I went home in a particularly uneasy frame of mind. It was painfully obvious that the country resembled nothing so much as a simmering kettle with a tightly shut lid.[1238]

On separate occasions, he told Krenz and Kochemasov that talking to Honecker and the Politburo had been like '*throwing peas against a brick wall*'.[1239] To Willy Brandt he confessed: 'I returned from the GDR *wor-*

1234 *Polityka* (Warsaw), No. 16, 18 April 1992.
1235 Schabowski, *Das Politbüro*, p. 77; Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 487.
1236 See p. 335.
1237 Interview with Krenz.
1238 Gorbatschow, *Erinnerungen*, p. 711.
1239 Transcript of the meeting between Krenz and Gorbachev in Moscow, 1 November 1989, SED Politburo, Central Party Archives, IV 2/1/704, p. 39 of the typed transcript (italics mine); Kotschemassow, *Meine letzte Mission*, p. 111. In keep-

ried and alarmed.'[1240] 'If it still needed confirmation', Gerasimov observed, 'Gorbachev now knew that there was never going to be any far-reaching reform in the GDR under Honecker.'[1241] Similarly, Falin and Shakhnazarov concluded that 'the days of the Honecker regime are numbered'.[1242] They were indeed. Honecker was forced to step down from office just ten days after Gorbachev had departed from East Berlin. But how is one to evaluate Gorbachev's behaviour? What was his contribution to Honecker's downfall?

Upon his return to Moscow, at the airport, Gorbachev remarked to members of the Politburo that, in front of the rostrum at the Platz der Republik, groups of young people had marched by, protesting against Honecker and the SED leadership, and claimed that he had turned to Honecker and said: 'You won't be able to stay [in power] unless you start reforms immediately.'[1243] Two questions arose from these remarks for the Soviet ambassador in East Berlin:

> First, why didn't Gorbachev speak about this during his meeting with the members of the leadership of the CC of the SED on 7 October in order to buttress his argument with newly won impressions? Second, at our get-together in the palace [Niederschönhausen] in the evening of 6 October, after the torch light procession of youth, Gorbachev didn't mention anything about such observations. On the contrary, he spoke of an impressive manifestation. Where, then, lies the truth?[1244]

The truth is most likely to be found in Gorbachev's continuing approach of persuasion and restraint. The peas he threw at Honecker were of the mushy and overcooked variety. Despite the fact that his remarks in the 7 October meetings about the necessity of change and about history being a stern judge were stronger than what he had ever stated before, they were made only after he had let Honecker throw sticks and stones at him for several years. Furthermore, nothing has come to light and no one in Gorbachev's entourage has ever suggested that he ever *directly* raised the sub-

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ing with the appropriate English idiom, I have added the 'brick' to the 'wall' of the transcript and Kochemasov's report.

1240 Transcript of meeting between Brandt and Gorbachev, Moscow, 17 October 1989, M.S. Gorbachev, 'Iz Arkhiva Gorbacheva: M. S. Gorbachev – W. Brandt', *Svobodnaia mysl'*, No. 17 (November 1992), p. 27 (italics mine).

1241 Interview with Gerasimov.

1242 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 487.

1243 Kotschemassow, *Meine letzte Mission*, p. 113.

1244 Ibid.

ject of reform and the kinds of reform supposedly necessary with Honecker; that he at any time advised him to *step down* if he were unwilling to comply with his suggestions; and that he was actively encouraging or authorizing anyone in the East German leadership or in the Soviet imperial establishment in the GDR to seek ways to *replace* Honecker.

A good case can be made for the argument that, if Gorbachev had wanted to maintain some semblance of cohesion and commonality in the 'socialist community', he now needed to interfere more vigorously on behalf of processes of change in the GDR and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and that it was simply not enough to try through pleading and persuasion to change Honecker's siege and bunker mentality and the policies conducted on that basis. One of the possible ways to bring pressure to bear on Honecker would have been a public campaign. But there was none. Soviet reports on the anniversary did not even hint at any dissonance. They failed to mention the demonstrations against the SED regime. They trumpeted utterly false notes such as 'the historic anniversary of the German socialist state' had proceeded 'in an atmosphere of optimism'.[1245] Those who had seen the torch light procession on 6 October had realized that East German youth had 'taken over the banner of socialism and peace on German soil from the older generation and were carrying it forward into future decades'. The military parade on the following day had emphasized that 'the GDR remains a reliable member of the Warsaw alliance'.[1246]

As noted above in reference to the KGB and its *Luch* operation, there was also no coordinated and consistent attempt at rearing a party faction in the SED that Moscow could have relied upon to remove the recalcitrant party leader from office. Schabowski has acknowledged: 'The Soviet ambassador was not, as he would have been in former times, allowed to interfere.' When Walter Ulbricht was forced to resign, 'everything was discussed in Moscow. But now there was no Brezhnev Doctrine.'[1247] Gorbachev confirmed publicly on 6 October and reiterated privately to Krenz on 1 November that 'matters relating to the German Democratic Republic

1245 S. Baigarov, B. Ovchinnikov, and M. Podkliuchnikov, 'Nash orientir - druzhba', *Pravda*, 8 October 1989; similarly their earlier report, 'Znamia truda i mira. Spetsial'nye korrespondenty "Pravdy" peredaiut iz Berlina', *Pravda*, 6 October 1989.

1246 Ibid., the special correspondents' report of 7 October, *Pravda*, 8 October 1989.

1247 Schabowski interview with Serge Schmemann, *New York Times*, 17 October 1989.

are decided not in Moscow, but in Berlin.'[1248] It may be credible, as Krenz has said, that Gorbachev's parting remark at the Schönefeld airport to a small group of 'trusted East German comrades' had been '*deistvuite*' (take action), but it would be quite erroneous to draw from this the conclusion that Gorbachev had thereby given an opposition faction in the party a signal to act.[1249] Schabowski calls such ideas 'simply a pathetic myth'.[1250] The Soviet party leader could not in the least have considered 'Politburo members Mittag and Axen, who were also at the airport', to 'have been possible conspirators' against Honecker.[1251] Yet if Gorbachev *had* wanted to promote the removal of Honecker, his ability to do so may have been limited but corresponding possibilities certainly existed.[1252]

In accordance with the inner logic of the new paradigm, he emphasized instead the need for events to run their course. Autonomy of national decision makers, non-interference and freedom of choice were the new operational principles that he applied. As he told Krenz in Moscow, he had 'always exercised the greatest degree of restraint towards the comrades in the GDR'. He had, of course, known 'very well the situation in the GDR'. But his goal had been '*not to let disharmony arise* in the relations' between the CPSU and the SED. He had been patient because he 'understood that the [East German] *party and the whole society had to mature for these changes*'.[1253] Thus, in Gorbachev's design, rather than taking the initiative himself to impose change, he left it up to the East German reformist leaders to take charge. Falin put it succinctly when he told Krenz after the 7 October banquet that Gorbachev, as a guest in East Berlin, 'has done and said more than could be expected from a guest. Everything else now depends on you'.[1254] The anti-Honecker conspirators were left to their own devices and limited to keeping Gorbachev informed of their progress.

This process began at the end of the anniversary celebrations, when Krenz and Schabowski made some cautious attempts to convey to various

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1248 The 6 October remark, as quoted above, p. 495; for Gorbachev's reiteration of the point, see Krenz, 'Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Mauer', p. 366.
1249 Krenz, *Wenn Mauern fallen*, p. 96.
1250 Schabowski, *Das Politbüro*, p. 77.
1251 Ibid.
1252 For details see pp. 378-79.
1253 Transcript of meeting between Gorbachev and Krenz, in Moscow, 1 November 1989, SED Politburo, Central Party Archives, J IV, 2/1/704, p. 37 of the typed transcript (italics mine).
1254 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 487 (italics mine).

members of the Soviet delegation, including Falin and Gerasimov, the notion that some leaders in the SED top echelons were dissatisfied with Honecker's disastrous course.[1255] Krenz told Falin: 'Your [party leader] has said everything there was to say. Ours didn't understand anything.'[1256] As the details of the plan for Honecker's involuntary resignation were taking shape, Harry Tisch, a full member of the SED Politburo and chairman of the trade unions, who had travelled to the USSR on 16 October on a routine visit, informed Gorbachev about the planned move. The Soviet party leader reportedly 'took note' of this information 'with satisfaction and without losing many words over it'.[1257]

The information was apparently not lost on Gorbachev. On the following day, when the SED Politburo met in East Berlin to depose Honecker, he reassured Willy Brandt (and probably also himself) that

> serious changes are beginning to take place [in the GDR]. A meeting of the [SED] Politburo will take place today to be followed by a plenary meeting of the CC. At issue will be the [establishment of] a broad dialogue of the party with society and the population.[1258]

But what were Gorbachev's options if these serious changes were not to materialize in the East German communist party and the broad dialogue between the SED and the population failed to occur? They would then be quite limited. In essence, he would find himself not simply on the proverbial horns of a dilemma but tossed in the air by 'history' as if on the horns of a bull in the streets of Pamplona. For his approach of non-interference to work in favour of the Soviet Union and the creation of a reform socialist East Germany, he needed the cooperation of both the West and the population in the GDR. A separate reform socialist GDR, however, was neither in the interest of the West German government nor of the East German population. This would be revealed unequivocally after the collapse of the Berlin wall and through the official West German and popular East German reactions to that momentous event.

1255 Schabowski, *Das Politbüro*, p. 77.
1256 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 487.
1257 Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, p. 262.
1258 Transcript of meeting between Brandt and Gorbachev in Moscow, 17 October 1989, M. S. Gorbachev, 'Iz Arkhiva Gorbacheva: M. S. Gorbachev – W. Brandt,' *Svobodnaia mysl'*, No. 17 (November 1992), p. 28.

3. Gorbachev and Krenz

With the replacement of Honecker, Gorbachev finally appeared to have achieved a major unspoken objective: the establishment of a reform socialist system under a new leader. Yet Krenz's regime was only transitional and it was to last only until 3 December. In a repetition of patterns observable in many previous revolutions, he and the demoralized representatives of the *ancien régime* were retreating step by step in front of ever more insistent and more far-reaching demands for change. The pressures were transported to the top like on a conveyor belt: popular opinion influenced the attitudes and actions of the rank and file of the party, who in turn exerted pressure on the top party leaders. They, like the troubled imperial centre, were unwilling to use force and lost control over the course of events.

In his attempt to construct reform socialism in East Germany, Krenz faced major problems. One was that of political legitimacy. When Honecker resigned, he had suggested Krenz as his successor, thereby conveying a perhaps not too erroneous notion of continuity. Krenz, after all, had for a long time been considered Honecker's heir apparent, the *Kronprinz*, or crown prince, of the regime.[1259] In the perceptions of the members of the democratic opposition, he was considered a careerist capable of making tactical adjustments but not of carrying out strategic change. As chief of internal security in the party, he was held responsible for many years of repression and for having ordered the violent dissolution of the 7 October demonstrations in East Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden and other East German cities. As head of the electoral commission, he was seen as having been responsible for rigging the May local elections. And as head of the delegation that had travelled to China after the June crackdown in Tiananmen Square to congratulate the Chinese, he was regarded as not being averse to a 'Chinese solution' in East Germany. Many observers, including members of the SED, were appalled by his hour-long television speech, a repetition of his address to the earlier CC session, with which Krenz had begun his rule on 18 October.[1260] Matters were not helped either by the fact that

1259 This problem was referred to by Schabowski as the 'curse of the Pharao'; Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, p. 271.

1260 Schabowski is scathing in his criticism of the speech, saying that Krenz, appearing in front of millions of people in East and West Germany, 'simply repeated what he had told the highest party organization a few hours earlier ... as if he

Krenz assumed all of Honecker's political functions and adorned himself with his regalia. He allowed himself to be crowned party chief, head of state, and chairman of the national defense council. Furthermore, several of the discredited members of the old Politburo and the Central Committee apparatus, including Horst Dohlus and Hans-Joachim Böhme, some the most pliant of the Honecker leadership, were reappointed to their positions.[1261]

It was obvious that the CC, as it was then constituted, was unwilling and incapable of confessing to the fundamental errors of the past and meeting the new challenges. Furthermore, an internal Politburo report (compiled by Dohlus) still observed with opprobrium that the Neue Forum was continuing 'to develop broad activity in all social areas' and that the church institutions were continuing 'to serve the opposition forces in their activity'.[1262] At the same time, the report was optimistic that the ground could be cut from under the opposition movement and that a greater degree of trust could be established between the SED and the population if the party entered upon the road to democratization and openness jointly with Gorbachev. In implementation of the report, the Politburo decided to permit again the sale of *Sputnik* magazine. On 1 November it also reopened the borders with Czechoslovakia and three days later announced that its citizens would be allowed to leave through Czechoslovakia upon simple presentation of personal identity cards. This had the immediate and, from the SED's viewpoint, disastrous effect that over the weekend

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was speaking in front of a gigantically enlarged Central Committee'; Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, p. 272. In fairness, however, many parts of the speech were *not* couched in the party jargon; see Wolfgang Oschlies, 'Egon Krenz: "Mut zur Wahrheit": Sprachliche Anmerkungen zur Antrittsrede des neuen SED-Chefs', *Gelesen, kommentiert* (Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien), No. 19, 19 October 1989.

1261 The mixture of the old and the new and differences over how to deal with the mounting problems in East Germany were evident also in the fact that the East German security agencies were still plotting and scheming to carry out all sorts of, as they called it, Measures for the Prevention of the Further Formation and for the Roll Back of Anti-Socialist Movements; heading of an agenda item prepared by Mielke and others for the SED Politburo session of 24 October 1989, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2A/3250.

1262 Information Concerning the Current Political Situation after the Ninth Meeting of the Central Committee of the SED, internal paper for the SED Politburo session of 23 October 1989, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2A/3250.

when the announcement was made a record 23,500 East Germans left for West Germany. This was a higher rate of emigration than during the peak periods in August 1961, when East Germany had closed the borders and built the wall.[1263]

Another record was broken on 4 November. The largest demonstrations in the GDR since 1953, with about half a million people participating in the event, took place on Berlin's Alexanderplatz. For many participants the demonstrations were a moving experience. Organized by the opposition movement, the speakers included dissidents of dubious political conviction, such as Markus Wolf, the former intelligence chief, and trial lawyer Gregor Gysi, later to become head of the PDS, the renamed SED.[1264] None of the speakers' placards and banners called for reunification as yet. The demands were for freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of travel, and accountability of government officials. The *volonté général* ('*We* are the people!') was set against the no longer credible claim of the party to be the people's vanguard. Clearly, the framework for the changes envisaged was a socialist East Germany with a human face. In fact, the representatives of the Neue Forum and other alternative and opposition forces in East Germany now began to call more persistently and vigorously on their compatriots to remain in their own country rather than look for a brighter future in West Germany.

Among many other inalienable conditions, Soviet support for the reform socialist experiment was seen as crucial by the new regime. This was evident in the internal report for the Politburo meeting of 23 October which had asserted that 'the telephone conversation between Comrades Egon Krenz and Mikhail Gorbachev [see below] elicited great satisfaction among the population' and that the citizenry was 'looking forward to the imminent visit by Comrade Krenz in Moscow', a forthcoming event that they 'understood to be significant for the closing of ranks between the SED and the CPSU'.[1265] It was indicated also by Krenz's later statement

1263 The figures on emigration according to ADN, the East German news agency, 6 November 1989.

1264 Gysi, at the time of the demonstrations, was one of the few independent lawyers in the GDR. In that position, he defended dissidents such as Robert Havemann, Rudolf Bahro, Jürgen Fuchs, Bärbel Bohley and Ulrike Poppe.

1265 SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2A/3250. The content of the telephone conversation was reported in *Neues Deutschland*, 23 October 1989. Schabowski has reported that Krenz, in a Politburo meeting on 29 October, had explained that, in his first meeting as party chief with Gor-

that he would never have accepted the job of party leader if he had not been convinced that he would receive Gorbachev's backing.[1266] On 21 October he called the Soviet leader and informed him about the leadership change. In the conversation, according to Krenz, he did receive the Soviet leader's 'full support'. Nothing was said that would have led him to believe that Gorbachev was 'anything but sincere in his backing for a reform socialist East Germany'.[1267]

Reports in the Soviet press also conveyed the notion that there was support in Moscow for a reform socialist East Germany. As noted in the context of the October celebrations in East Berlin, the central Soviet papers and national television had essentially failed to paint an even vaguely accurate picture of Honecker and the deteriorating state of affairs in the GDR. Now, after the leadership change, Soviet newspapers launched vitriolic attacks on Honecker, saying that with the help of the news media he had erected a 'wall of silence cut off from reality and trumpeted the GDR's success and the over-fulfillment of the annual plans not very different from the way our dispatches used to be'.[1268] As a complete surprise to most Soviet readers, their newspapers now reported that, since August alone, more than 60,000 East Germans had fled to the West. Krenz, according to the press reports, had much to recommend him. He belonged to a new generation of East German leaders, had visited the Soviet Union several times in the past, spoke Russian fluently and was ready to engage in dialogue with the democratic forces of his country. [1269]

In private conversation with Krenz on 1 November in Moscow, Gorbachev reiterated his support for Krenz. According to the transcript of the talks, the Soviet leader took note of the fact that the East German people and party were about to embark on fundamental reform and wished Krenz success in this endeavour. East Germany was, after all, the Soviet Union's

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bachev to take place in Moscow, he wanted to have the party's 'blessing' for his policies; Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, p. 299.

1266 Interview with Krenz.

1267 Ibid.

1268 *Trud*, 22 October 1989, in an article by its correspondent in East Berlin, V. Nikitin.

1269 Ibid.

'closest friend and ally'.[1270] He also reflected on the importance of their meeting:

> Your visit, Comrade Krenz, so shortly after your election to the highest offices of the GDR, is of extraordinary significance for mutual coordination [of our policies] at the beginning of a new stage in our relations. The point [now] is jointly to demonstrate that we stand together and that the development in the Soviet Union is very close to that in the GDR and *vice versa*. This is also important for the other socialist countries and for the whole world. The FRG, too, will be interested in what it is that Gorbachev and Krenz have agreed to. In principle, I share all the thoughts that you, Comrade Krenz, have expressed.[1271]

As Krenz later said, since he was concerned about East German instabilities on the one hand, and the widening discussion in the West about German unification on the other, the central purpose of his visit was to establish whether Gorbachev was still committed to the idea of the continued existence of two German states and what role, if any, he saw for East Germany in a new Europe.[1272] The transcript reflects this concern. Krenz asked his host 'to outline more clearly the place which he [intended] to allocate to the FRG and the GDR in the all-European house'.[1273] Gorbachev prefaced his reply by saying that he welcomed the fact that Krenz had raised this question and continued:

> On this problem [German unity] the GDR, the Soviet Union, and the other socialist countries have until now pursued a correct line. [This line] has led to the recognition of the existence of two separate German states, to the interna-

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1270 Transcript (*Niederschrift*) of the talks between Krenz and Gorbachev on 1 November 1989 in Moscow, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, IV 2/1/704, pp. 2-3 (indirect speech); see also the supplementary Politburo materials on the visit, J IV 2/2/2358 and J IV 2/2A/3255. Krenz also took notes, to which he referred in his 'Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Berliner Mauer im Herbst 1989,' *Osteuropa*, No. 4 (1992), pp. 365-369. All subsequent citations from the transcript are in indirect speech (indirect speech) in the original, rendered here for better readability in direct speech. For the same reason, the first person singular has been used for the 'Comrade Honecker' and 'Comrade Gorbachev' in the original. The subsequent page numbers are those of the typed manuscript. − Zelikow and Rice quote from an essentially identical transcript kept in the Bundesarchiv in Potsdam, E1-5630; see Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 87-91. The reason for the existence of two versions is unclear.

1271 Transcript, pp. 33-34; Krenz, 'Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Mauer', p. 367.

1272 Interview with Krenz.

1273 Transcript, p. 19; Krenz, 'Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Mauer', p. 367.

> tional recognition of the GDR, to its active role in the world, to the conclusion of the [1970] Moscow treaty as well as other treaties, and to the Helsinki conference.

He then proceeded to dismiss the talk about German unification. There was nothing to worry about. 'There is no reason', he told Krenz, 'to surmise how the German question will be solved some time [in the future]. The current realities have to be taken into account. This is the important thing.' Typically, as several times before, he left open the possibility of reunification at some distant time in the future:

> Should the tendency of rapprochement in Europe endure *for several decades* and the process of integration continue – irrespective of the social systems and with a separate evolution of politics, culture, paths of development, and traditions – then, *perhaps*, the question could be different. But this is *not a problem of current politics.*[1274]

What is it that gave Gorbachev the confidence so close to the collapse of the GDR and the Soviet empire to believe that the question of German unity might 'perhaps' arise in 'several decades'? Internationally, he argued, there was no support for it. It had become clear to him

> in recent talks with Margaret Thatcher, François Mitterrand, but also with Jaruzelski and [Italian prime minister Giulio] Andreotti, that all of these political leaders proceed from the [necessity of] safeguarding the post-war realities, including the existence of two German states. Posing the question of the unity of Germany is regarded by all of them as extremely explosive for the current situation. They also do not want the Warsaw Pact and NATO to be dissolved, and it is for this reason that they are for continued membership of Poland and Hungary in the Warsaw Pact. The balance [of power] in Europe [they argue] should not be disturbed because no one knew what the consequences might be.[1275]

As for the United States, he thought that they had 'until now taken a similar position'. He reported that, in a meeting between Yakovlev and former national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, the question had been dis-

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1274 Transcript, p. 24 (italics mine).

1275 Transcript, p. 20; Krenz, 'Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Mauer', p. 367. Gorbachev had expressed these views about what Western leaders really thought about the prospect of German reunification in private conversation with Willy Brandt, chairman of the SPD and the Socialist International; 'Iz Arkhiva Gorbacheva: M.S. Gorbachev – W. Brandt' (transcript of a meeting between Gorbachev and Brandt, held in Moscow on 17 October 1989), *Svobodnaia mysl'*, No. 17 (November 1992), pp. 22-29.

cussed 'whether one could imagine a situation in which the reunification of Germany became a reality'. Brzezinski had replied that 'for him, this would be a calamity'.[1276] Nevertheless, Gorbachev thought that there were 'some nuances' in the American attitude, which still had to be examined. This idea, however, was dismissed by Shakhnazarov, present at the meeting in his capacity as Gorbachev's adviser on Eastern Europe: to the extent that nuances existed, they were most likely designed for 'the broad public'.[1277]

The exercise in mutual reassurance continued with evidence derived from Gorbachev's talks with West German social democratic leaders. Gorbachev told Krenz that Willy Brandt, chairman of the SPD and the Socialist International, had said that he considered East Germany an enormous achievement of socialism. Its disappearance would be a shocking defeat for social democracy. Although Brandt was putting himself at a distance from communists, he nevertheless considered social democracy a branch of the workers' movement and continued to adhere to the socialist idea. Egon Bahr, chief architect of the SPD's Ostpolitik, the Soviet leader went on, had unequivocally made this very point.[1278] Further evidence for the vision Brandt shared with Gorbachev that most likely confirmed his (Gorbachev's) perceptions on the long-term existence of two German states was provided on 17 October, in private conversation. The SPD party chairman outlined the common views and interests on the German problem that allegedly existed between Western European social democrats and socialists, on the one hand, and between Soviet and Eastern European reform communists, on other. He regretted that young people were leaving the GDR despite the 'new self-awareness' that was being born there. The remedy he suggested was for the SED leadership 'to begin a dialogue not only with the bloc parties but also with society at large'.[1279] Importantly, Brandt

1276 Transcript, p. 19. The East German transcript uses the term *Zusammenbruch*, which could be rendered as 'collapse'. But this could give the idea that Brzezinski, as reported by Yakovlev and Gorbachev, had simply referred to the collapse of the post-war order. But the thought to be rendered here is probably that of a strongly undesirable development, that is, a 'calamity,' 'catastrophe,' or 'disaster'.

1277 Transcript, p. 20.

1278 Ibid.

1279 'Iz Arkhiva Gorbacheva: M.S. Gorbachev - W. Brandt' (transcript of a meeting between Gorbachev and Brandt, held in Moscow on 17 October 1989), *Svobodnaia mysl'*, No. 17 (November 1992), p. 28.

outlined an alternative to German unification in the form of increased cooperation between West Germany and a reformed East Germany. He told Gorbachev:

> One cannot separate German from European affairs. If this is the case, and if the rest of Europe will keep moving towards closer relations and integration, then both German states may discover more similarities in different spheres between themselves than with other countries. Maybe it makes sense, then, to draw before them the perspective of getting some 'common roof' for cooperation in those spheres.[1280]

It is precisely such a 'common roof' in the form of a community governed by treaties across various dimensions of policy (*Vertragsgemeinschaft*) that reformist GDR Prime Minister Hans Modrow would propose only several weeks later.

To return to the Krenz-Gorbachev exchanges, there is a second reason why the Soviet leader thought that German unification was not on the international agenda and why East Germany would and should continue to occupy an important room in the Common House of Europe: the by now familiar idea that democratic socialism in the GDR not only had a chance but more of a chance in that country than elsewhere in the socialist bloc. According to Gorbachev, this was true, in particular, because of the 'social orientation' of GDR's economy – a strong asset 'that should not be abandoned'. Although he considered it 'too early' for the SED, just a few days after the replacement of Honecker, to present a 'detailed plan' of change, he was nevertheless heartened by the fact that the 'main directions of a program of action have clearly been outlined – more socialism, renewal and democratization'.[1281]

But what kind of socialism? If the GDR were to introduce democratic socialism and a market economy and present a human face, what would be the difference between such a system and the West German *Sozialstaat*? Krenz, probably in contrast to Gorbachev, who never addressed this issue publicly and (to the extent that this is known) privately, was conscious of a basic problem. Echoing Reinhold's conviction, expressed a few months earlier, that East Germany was thinkable only as socialist alternative to West Germany,[1282] Krenz considered de-ideologization (*Entideolo-*

1280 Ibid.
1281 Transcript of the Krenz-Gorbachev meeting, p. 35.
1282 Otto Reinhold, Dean of the SED Central Committee's Academy of Social Sciences, p. 298.

gisierung) of the relations between the two German states to be a 'very complicated question' and a problem 'quite different than what is [normal] in the relations among other states'. De-ideologization in the German-German relationship would mean 'abandoning the defense of socialism' in East Germany and would raise questions as to the rationale of the Berlin wall and the border regime between East and West Germany.[1283]

Furthermore, did reform socialism in the GDR mean that the SED should abandon its claim to the monopoly on power? Apparently not, in Gorbachev's view. Only a few weeks earlier, he had rejected this idea. To revert to the private conversation between him and Brandt, the latter had asked him for advice on what he considered to be a difficult problem with which he had been confronted:

> A group of Social Democrats has been formed in the GDR. They consider themselves not a party but an association. I don't know them personally. But I have heard that they don't want to be an appendage of the SED. Recently, I received a letter from them in my capacity as chairman of the Socialist International and was put in an awkward position. On the one hand, we can't admit this association to the Socialist International. On the other hand, I can't just refuse to react to this approach.

The CPSU General Secretary replied by saying,

> I would advise you, in order not to do any harm to the processes taking place there, to wait some time and particularly now to show caution and restraint. Later, after reassessing the situation and the on-going processes, it may be possible to work out a reaction.[1284]

To return to Krenz and Gorbachev, a large part of their conversation consisted of a diagnosis of East Germany's economic malaise and its political implications. Quite in contrast to the pattern of the Honecker-Gorbachev talks, the two leaders now soberly and at times sombrely addressed what they acknowledged to be a precarious state of affairs – and one utterly at variance with Gorbachev's optimistic assessment at the meeting that, if Honecker had adopted a reform program just 'two or three years ago', the ensuing development 'could have been the culmination of his life'.[1285] Given the importance of the topic, it is appropriate to link it up with the

1283 Transcript, p. 25.
1284 Transcript of meeting between Brandt and Gorbachev, p. 28.
1285 Transcript, p. 40.

'debt and dependency' problem that had plagued Soviet-East German relations in the Honecker era.[1286]

By 1989, the economic plight of the GDR was not only serious but desperate. Due to the secrecy and compartmentalization of functions endemic to communist systems, few members even at the top echelons of the SED were aware of this fact. The extent of the economic malaise was revealed to them only in a watershed analysis of the economic situation of the GDR, presented by Gerhard Schürer, the chairman of the State Planning Commission, and one of the chief economic advisors to Honecker. The report was presented to Krenz and most of the members of the SED Politburo on 31 October and to the Tenth Conference of the SED Central Committee from 8 to 10 November 1989. When Krenz discussed East Germany's predicaments with Gorbachev, he was not only aware of the content of the report but several times used data it contained. [1287]

The Schürer report concentrated on three major deficiencies of the East German economy: (1) the decline in the 'rate of accumulation' in the productive sector from 16.1 percent in 1970 to 9.9 percent in 1988, which had led to obsolescence of much of the industrial equipment and declining rates of growth in national income; (2) the financing of economic growth through external and internal credit; and (3) the inability to meet the planning targets for exports in the 1986-1990 Five-Year Plan. The overall picture painted by the report was that of a society living far beyond its means. Honecker had blatantly disregarded what he had said in 1971, that 'our society should never borrow more than it produces'.[1288] The violation of this

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1286 On the 'debts and dependency' issue, see *above*, pp. 203-9, 286-87 and pp. 518-19.

1287 Gerhard Schürer *et al.*, 'Analyse der ökonomischen Lage der DDR mit Schlussfolgerungen', dated 27 October 1989, submitted to the Politburo for its meeting of 31 October 1989, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2/2356. The co-authors were Gerhard Beil, Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski, Ernst Höfner and Arno Donda. The Politburo endorsed the report without changes. − For a detailed discussion of the report and its repercussions, see Hans-Hermann Hertle, 'Staatsbankrott: Der ökonomische Untergang des SED-Staates', *Deutschland-Archiv*, Vol. 25, No. 10 (October 1992), pp. 1019-30, and his interview with Schürer, '"Das reale Bild war eben katastrophal!": Gespräch mit Gerhard Schürer', ibid., pp. 1031-39.

1288 Information Concerning the Current Political Situation after the Ninth Meeting of the Central Committee of the SED, internal paper for the SED Politburo session of 23 October 1989, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2a/3250.

common economic sense was amply reflected in the data that Schürer submitted. These included a reported increase in the GDR's indebtedness to the 'non-socialist world' from 2 billion Valutamarks, or hard currency marks, in 1970 to about 49 billion marks in 1989; the growth in the regime's internal debt from 12 billion East German marks in 1970 to 123 billion marks in 1989; a debt-to-export ratio of 150 percent, rather than the 25 percent that Schürer considered economically sensible; subsidization of the microelectronic industry to the tune of 3 billion East German marks annually; and labour productivity that was 40 percent lower than in West Germany.[1289] Perhaps the most shocking revelation to the party was the report's assessment that, if merely an increase in the level of hard-currency indebtedness was to be avoided, the rate of consumption would have to be curtailed by 25 to 30 percent.[1290]

One of the many reasons for the mounting debt and economic decline lay in the difficulties experienced by the Soviet Union, upon which the GDR had long relied for much of its economic activity, including the import of raw materials at cut rates and, early in the Honecker era, the financing of credit. But in 1989 the Soviet Union itself was experiencing acute financial distress and was no longer able and no longer willing to sustain the GDR in the way to which the latter had become accustomed. The centre was looking after its own interests rather than those of the periphery.

The political implications of the dismal economic state of affairs were considerable. East Germany in the late Honecker era had led a kind of dual existence. On the one hand, it had stridently affirmed its sovereignty and rejected any attempt, implied or explicit, by West Germany, to erode its political or social autonomy. On the other hand, it had begun to undermine this very autonomy by allowing its indebtedness to Western banks and governments to increase. The GDR, as a result, became economically most dependent on that state from which it most wanted to remain apart. But West Germany's willingness to continue to finance much of the debt in exchange for making the division of Germany less painful for the East Germans (*menschliche Erleichterungen*) and a lessening of tensions between the two Germanys changed during the Krenz interregnum: it was progressively raising the price tag for economic and financial assistance.

1289 Schürer report, pp. 4 and 10-11.
1290 Ibid., p. 11.

Within a few days after the opening of the wall, it would no longer be content with piecemeal concessions but demand fundamental systemic change. Given the severity of the GDR's economic problems, something had to give, and that something would turn out to be the regime itself. In the apt words of the analyst: 'No other state in the world [other than West Germany] would have been ready to relieve the GDR of its debts, and its allies were in no position to do so. Thus, the political and economic destruction of the GDR was preordained.'[1291]

To resume the description and analysis of the private exchanges between Krenz and Gorbachev, it was Krenz who introduced the topic by saying that the day before the SED Politburo had received and discussed an unadulterated report of a kind that had never been submitted to that body. He was concerned, he said, that when the report would be brought to the attention of the Central Committee, it 'could produce a shock with detrimental consequences'.[1292] In reply, Gorbachev claimed (not very credibly) that

> the Soviet Union has been aware of the real state of affairs in the national economy of the GDR ... and has always endeavoured to meet its obligations towards the GDR. Except for the fact that, due to domestic problems, 2 million tons of projected oil deliveries had to be cancelled, [we] always understood that the GDR cannot function without the Soviet Union. Such support was the internationalist duty of the Soviet Union. At the same time, [we] asked ourselves, why, given this state of affairs, were we constantly being showered in such an aggressive way with GDR success stories? This was hard to bear since [we] knew the real condition of the GDR. [I] tried once to raise this issue with Comrade Honecker and to discuss the GDR's indebtedness. But he strongly objected to this since such problems [supposedly] did not exist.[1293]

Krenz repeated (without direct attribution) some of the salient data of Schürer's report, saying that the GDR had to pay interest in the amount of $4.5 billion, which amounted to 62 percent of annual export revenue; that it had to raise new credit in order to meet its credit obligations; that the electronics industry was being subsidized with 3 billion marks per annum; that the economy was facing new challenges; and the population had new expectations, but if one were to match productive capacity and consump-

1291 Hertle, 'Staatsbankrott: Der ökonomische Untergang', p. 1019.
1292 Transcript of the Krenz-Gorbachev exchanges, pp. 9-10.
1293 Ibid., p. 10. Gorbachev may have alluded to his talks with Honecker on 20 April 1986 in East Berlin; see *above*, pp. 279-91.

tion, the standard of living would have 'to be lowered immediately by 30 percent'.[1294] At one point during Krenz's presentation of economic data, Gorbachev interjected and admitted that he had 'not imagined the situation to be that precarious'.[1295]

What, then, was to be done? What policies should be adopted, individually and jointly, to meet the precarious situation? Even a benevolently inclined reader of the record can only conclude that the Krenz-Gorbachev policy prescriptions fail to add up to a coherent plan of action. They constitute instead a hodgepodge of inadequate measures, obsolete remedies, contradictory preferences and vague commitments.[1296] A first set of measures discussed concerned *economic assistance*. If East Germany was to survive as a state, let alone be transformed into a showcase of reform socialism, a massive rescue operation was immediately required. But the Soviet Union was neither prepared nor able even to begin thinking about such an operation. At one point, after having admitted earlier that, for domestic reasons, the USSR had to cut oil deliveries to the GDR by 2 million tons (see above), Gorbachev assured Krenz that 'things would remain unchanged [sic], that the GDR would [continue to] receive raw materials from the Soviet Union'.[1297] At another point, he promised that the Soviet Union 'will do everything in order to meet the obligations it has assumed' but acknowledged that this would only 'alleviate the situation in the GDR somewhat'.[1298] It is only in relation to the socialist bloc as a whole and Polish indebtedness to the West in particular that Gorbachev realistically

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1294 Transcript, pp. 9-10, 13-16.

1295 Transcript, p. 15. The transcript of the Krenz-Gorbachev talks in the Bundesarchiv in Potsdam (document E1-56320) states that the East German leader put the projected GDR debt at the end of 1989 at $26.5 billion and the estimated current account deficit at $21.1 billion. The note taker recorded: 'Astonished, Comrade Gorbachev asked whether these numbers are correct.' For a summary of the talks, including the above citation, see Zelikow and Rice *Germany Unified*, p. 87.

1296 This author, therefore, disagrees with Zelikow and Rice, who write that 'Krenz and Gorbachev had agreed on a detailed plan of action'; ibid., p. 91.

1297 Transcript, pp. 10 and 22. The reality was, however, that – as Schürer had revealed in an earlier report (May 1989) – it had *not* been 'possible to conclude an agreement in the 1986-1990 Five-Year Plan ... for the delivery of certain raw materials [from the USSR], such as lead, zinc, apatite concentrate, ammonium phosphate and ...'; cited in Hertle, '"Das reale Bild war eben katastrophal"', p. 1034.

1298 Transcript, p. 17.

and unequivocally stated: '*The question is often posed what the Soviet Union can do in this situation. Economically, it can do very little.*'[1299]

A second circle of problems touched upon several times in the conversation were the relations between the Soviet Union and *West Germany*. The record clearly reveals, as the Germans would say, *Ratlosigkeit*, or not knowing what to do. At one point in the talks, Gorbachev suggested that Moscow should seek to 'bind the partner FRG more closely' to the Soviet Union because this would give East Germany a better position in the 'triangular relationship USSR-GDR-FRG'.[1300] At another, he thought that 'now is the time to exert more pressure on Chancellor Kohl', presumably for the reason that 'there are people in the governing parties who would like to get rid of Kohl', despite the fact (presumably advantageous for him in the CDU) that he had 'put his money on the nationalism horse'.[1301] And at yet another point, he declared that it was important to continue 'the principled and flexible policy' and to make sure that West Germany would 'not be able to exert pressure on the GDR through the known [economic and financial] mechanisms'.[1302]

A third set of policies discussed concerned the relationship between the *two Germanys*. Both leaders were acutely aware of and anxious about West German attempts to use economic leverage for political purposes but also conscious of the fact that East Germany now needed West German financial assistance more than ever. Furthermore, curtailment of the links between the two German states would have contradicted Gorbachev's New Thinking and his concept of the Common House of Europe. He therefore acknowledged that 'manifold human contacts exist between the two German states'; that 'it would be detrimental to reduce the relations between the GDR and the FRG or even to rupture them'; and that it was 'important for the GDR to maintain and further develop its relations with the GDR'.[1303] Yet at the same time, the contacts had to 'be kept under control and managed' and it was necessary 'to exercise caution so that the ideological opponent would not gain positions that he could exploit'.[1304]

1299 Transcript, p. 23 (italics mine). 'It is absurd to imagine,' Gorbachev continued, 'that the Soviet Union could subsidize 40 million Poles.'
1300 Transcript, p. 22.
1301 Transcript, pp. 22, 25.
1302 Transcript, p. 17.
1303 Transcript, pp. 21, 22.
1304 Transcript, p. 21.

A fourth set of measures dealt with the *political dimensions of Soviet-East German cooperation*. As previously in his private talks with Honecker, Gorbachev pleaded for more coordination and less secrecy. He also made it clear that he considered the party to be the main agent of change – a surprising and incongruous idea considering his own disappointments with the CPSU, his move away from that institution to an executive presidency and the fact that East Germany was not Hungary or Poland, that is, that the SED had neither a strong tradition nor a significant reservoir of reform socialism. Nevertheless, he advised Krenz to do what essentially amounted to copying major elements of the October 1988 CPSU reform: to replace party cadres at the forth-coming SED Central Committee plenum and to 'elect some smart and original people from the CC to the Politburo as well as prominent representatives from the cultural and scientific community to the Central Committee. That would improve the prestige of these bodies.' At the plenum 'one could certainly continue to defend Honecker' although it was 'doubtful whether this would still be possible in relation to society'. He agreed with Krenz that Soviet-East German cooperation should now 'be brought more strongly under the control of the parties'; that the 'exchange of experience should be intensified between the departments of the Central Committees'; and that the same applied to contacts between 'the CC secretaries'.[1305]

Fifth, the new East German leader provided his Soviet counterpart with information about some measures that had been taken and were being prepared in *East Germany* itself. The use of weapons at the borders to prevent would-be refugees from escaping would be stopped, Krenz told Gorbachev. The border troops had been instructed accordingly. The travel and emigration regime would be liberalized. Since this issue was the most important change coveted by the East German population and the most vexing for the SED and was to become a bone of contention between Moscow and East Berlin only a few days later, it is appropriate to quote Krenz in full:

> The draft of the new Law on Travel (*Reisegesetz*) has been adopted in the Politburo and has been passed on to the Council of Ministers, which will put it up for public discussion. It is scheduled to be adopted by the Volkskammer [parliament] before Christmas. Each GDR citizen, according to the law, will have the possibility to acquire a passport and an exit visa for travel to all

1305 Transcript, pp. 35-36.

> countries. The circle of those exempted from this [new rule] will be kept very small.

Krenz also mentioned that the GDR was not in a position to supply those who wanted to travel abroad with hard-currency funds. All of this would be made public.[1306]

In conclusion, a careful reading of the record of the conversation reveals not only an astonishing amount of wishful thinking and uncertainty about what to do next but also serious concern about future developments. Speaking about the mass demonstrations in the GDR, Krenz said that the party leadership would use political means to solve political problems. The demonstrations would be legalized and the police would not intervene. But he also acknowledged that 'the situation is developing according to its own dynamics'.[1307] Gorbachev had similar concerns:

> The processes now develop very dynamically and could further accelerate. The leadership of the party must react accordingly. If the processes were to gain in spontaneity or lose their political orientation, this would be a disaster. An unmanageable situation could thereby arise.

Gorbachev added that he had seen this happening in the Soviet Union.[1308] Concern about the likely course of events was evident also among his advisers.[1309] Chernyaev, for instance, remembers that, as Krenz's plane was leaving Moscow, several officials joked ominously: 'There goes the committee for the dissolution of the GDR.'[1310]

Such comments raise the question as to whether Krenz really had Gorbachev's backing or whether he and the *germanisty* advising him would have preferred someone like Modrow, with better reform socialist credentials, to be at the helm in East Germany. As for these credentials, Modrow had become chief of the regional party organization in Dresden in 1973 and almost immediately had gained respect and trust among party reformers and the population by his self-confidence, relaxed style and openness to discussion and new ideas. For instance, in interviews prior to his nomination to full Politburo membership on 3 November and to prime minister on 8 November, he had described the country as 'ruined' and said that,

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1306 Transcript, pp. 25-26.
1307 Transcript, p. 29.
1308 Transcript, p. 34.
1309 Interviews with Shakhnazarov and Grigoriev.
1310 Rice interview with Chernyaev, Moscow, June 1994, as quoted by Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 91.

without new leaders, East Germany would be 'lost'. Not surprisingly, in East Germany and abroad he was often described as a possible 'East German Gorbachev'.[1311] Krenz, in contrast, upon his appointment to the top leadership positions in the GDR – and in conformity with a pattern typical of many revolutions, where conservative reformers had first been replaced by more radical figures and then by revolutionaries – was widely considered a transitional figure.[1312]

In Gorbachev's talks with Krenz, there is a slight hint to the former's preferences. The Soviet party leader regretted that Honecker had 'blindly supported Comrade Mittag' and that he had humiliated and failed to consult with other SED leaders. Gorbachev had been struck 'especially negatively' by how Modrow had been dealt with.[1313] Furthermore, almost immediately after Krenz had taken office, Ambassador Kvitsinksy confidentially conveyed Moscow's preference for Modrow to a high-ranking official in the West German government.[1314] On 21 November, Portugalov mentioned to Teltschik that he doubted whether Krenz would outlast the next SED Party Congress and that Modrow would be his successor in the position of party leader.[1315] But while it is appropriate to infer from these remarks that the Soviet leadership and the Kremlin's *germanisty* would have preferred Modrow to Krenz as party chief, it would again be wrong to conclude that they conspired in his replacement or, for that matter, that they would have acted differently if Modrow had been elected party chief by the CC in mid-October. As with Honecker, the centre dealt with whoever happened to be the chief paladin at the periphery of the crumbling empire.

1311 Ferdinand Protzman, 'From Dresden, Torchbearer for Change', *New York Times*, 11 November 1989.

1312 This is, for instance, what Hungarian prime minister Németh told Kohl on 19 November in Bonn; Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 155; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 40.

1313 Transcript, p. 11. Krenz, in response, told Gorbachev that two years earlier Honecker had instructed him to intervene in controversies that had broken out in the Dresden party district and to engineer Modrow's replacement. Honecker's disapproval of Modrow is reflected also in the conclusions of an internal SED Central Committee inquiry. The party leadership of the Dresden region, the concluding report said, had allowed severe deficiencies in industry and construction to develop and showed a lack of offensive orientation 'in the struggle against bourgeois and hostile (*feindliche*) views'; *Neues Deutschland*, 23 June 1989.

1314 Interviews with Kvitsinsky and Teltschik.

1315 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 44.

4. The Collapse of the Berlin Wall

In Moscow, Krenz had defended the wall as historically necessary, as a 'border between two social systems, a border between two military blocs, ... a kind of protective shield.' He had rejected the idea to tear it down, saying: 'We should not live in a world of dreams.'[1316] Little more than a week later, a 'minor error' turned the world of dreams into reality.[1317] Liberalization of travel and emigration was one of the main points on the agenda of the new regime in East Berlin. The matter had become more urgent, however, as a result of external pressures. On 1 November, as mentioned, the East German government had reopened the borders with Czechoslovakia, and three days later it announced that its citizens would be allowed to leave through Czechoslovakia using only personal identity cards. As in September, thousands of East Germans crowded Czechoslovak roads and the West German embassy compound in Prague. On 7 November, foreign minister Fischer summoned Kochemasov and informed him that the Czech leadership had requested to free it from the nuisance of having to deal with the East German refugees *per se* but also to

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1316 Wire reports from Moscow, 1 November 1989; David Remnick, 'Krenz Hints at East German Perestroika', *Washington Post*, 2 November 1989.

1317 'Kleiner Irrtum, große Wirkung' (Small Error, Big Repercussions) is the title of the chapter in Krenz's book that deals with the collapse of the Berlin wall; *Wenn Mauern fallen*, p. 176. Several accounts of the main actors involved in the drama have been published, making it possible to reconstruct with some confidence the circumstances leading to the opening of the wall. The accounts include Krenz, *Wenn Mauern fallen*, pp. 176-82; *id*., 'Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Mauer', pp. 365-69; Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, pp. 302-11; *id*., *Das Politbüro*, pp. 134-39; and Kotschemassow, *Meine letzte Mission*, pp. pp. 184-87. − The extent to which Soviet leaders and officials were informed about the Law on Travel and how they reacted to the opening of the wall has best been described by Igor Maksimychev, Kochemasov's deputy, who was privy to the exchanges between Moscow, the Soviet embassy in East Berlin, and the East German government. The present account draws extensively on Maksimychev's testimony, notably his article, with Hans-Hermann Hertle, 'Die Maueröffnung: Eine russisch-deutsche Trilogie', *Deutschland-Archiv*, Vol. 27 (November 1994), pp. 1137-58; his 'Possible "Impossibilities"', *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 6 (June 1993), pp. 108-17; 'Krushenie. Rekviem po GDR', in *id.* and Hans Modrow, *Poslednii god GDR* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1993), pp. 9-156; and his two-part series, 'Berlinskaia stena. Ee padenie glazami ochevidtsa', *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 10 and 12 November 1993. He clarified some ambiguities in an interview with me on 2 June 1993 in Moscow.

prevent repercussions on the Czechoslovak population. If appropriate measures were not taken, the *Czechoslovak* government would be forced to close the borders with East Germany. Since such a turn of events, Fischer continued, could have unpredictable consequences, the SED Politburo was inclined to adopt the following decision: to formulate language in the new version of the Law on Travel under preparation to permit East German citizens to exit directly to West Germany. Permissible points of exit would be certain border crossing points in East Germany and in Czechoslovakia. Only GDR citizens who had applied for exit in East Germany would be allowed to leave through Czechoslovakia in transit to West Germany but not if they applied *in* Czechoslovakia. The East German foreign minister wanted the ambassador to ascertain the reaction of the Soviet leadership concerning the proposed measures.

Kochemasov immediately called Shevardnadze for instructions. The reply he received was that, 'If [our] friends consider such a decision to be feasible, there will in all likelihood be no objection.' But he would nevertheless tell the MFA bureaucracy to formulate an answer, which would be supplied to the East German leaders no later than 9 November. The Soviet foreign minister also asked the embassy to formulate a position.[1318] On 8 November, Kochemasov accordingly called a meeting of the leading embassy staff, including KGB and GRU representatives, in which he outlined the problem. The reaction of the participants in the meeting was unanimous: The GDR is a sovereign country, and the Soviet Union should not instruct it how to act. The East German leaders possessed the most accurate information on the internal political situation. *They* should know how to find a way out of the crisis. But they also should bear responsibility for the measures they adopted, not, as previously, the Soviet Union. As one of the embassy counsellors pointed out, since the planned step *de facto* meant the opening of the borders, an obviously risky step, East Berlin evidently wanted to share responsibility with Moscow for the possible conse-

1318 Kotschemassow, *Meine letzte Mission*, pp. 185-86. According to Falin, another telephone call was made by Shevardnadze's first deputy, Anatoli Kovalev. He had called Kochemasov and, like his superior, told him that the Law on Travel should be treated as an East German decision. The Soviet ambassador had not considered the oral instructions to be sufficient and asked for written confirmation; Falin, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 488-89.

quences. The Soviet foreign ministry was informed of the embassy's views.[1319]

Simultaneously with Fischer's request to the Soviet ambassador, Krenz had instructed prime minister Willi Stoph to work on an executive decree as the basis for a law on travel and emigration to be adopted later. (On 7 November, the government had resigned because parliament had rejected a rather restrictive cabinet draft law on exit but it continued to handle affairs until the formation of a new government.) Stoph transmitted these instructions to minister for state security Mielke. In the morning of 9 November, two colonels of his ministry, together with two interior ministry department heads, began drafting a text in accordance with the new instructions. The limited character of the instructions was, in the Soviet embassy's view, confirmed by the fact that the working group did not include representatives of the East German foreign ministry's department on West Berlin, which, because of its special significance, had at some point come under direct control of the head of party and state.

However, either for the reason that the drafting committee did not understand the instructions or because it deliberately chose to ignore them, the draft prepared by the four officials was strikingly different from what Fischer apparently had intended. The draft referred to all types of travel, including short-term visits, and to all of East Germany's borders, including the borders with West Berlin. Although it is more than doubtful that the drafting committee did not know the quadripartite status of Berlin and the duty of East Germany to consult the Soviet embassy on all questions affecting this status, it seems that their members failed to direct the attention of their superiors to the latitude they had allowed themselves.

Starting in the morning of 9 November, the phone connecting the Soviet embassy with the East German government hardly ceased ringing. East German foreign ministry officials requested information about Moscow's response. But Kochemasov could not reach anyone in the Soviet capital to give an authoritative answer. Finally, Ivan Aboimov, deputy foreign minister and head of the MFA's department for European socialist countries – at his own risk – instructed the ambassador to tell Krenz that Moscow had no objections. Any other response was hardly possible. But both

1319 This account draws in particular on Maksimychev, 'Berlinskaia stena' and 'Krushenie'.

Kochemasov and Aboimov naturally assumed that the East German authorities would act in accordance with the intentions conveyed by Fischer.

In the meantime, a political storm had broken loose in the GDR. A three-day plenary meeting of the SED Central Committee had begun on 8 November with the resignation of the full Politburo (practically unchanged since Honecker had been forced to step down) and continued in an atmosphere of popular distrust in the party and the new leadership. On the following day, shortly prior to the resumption of the CC plenum at 3:30 p.m., outgoing prime minister Stoph handed the draft of the new Law on Travel to Krenz. Since the latter realized that the law was of crucial importance for the future of the country and should not be a matter determined only by the Politburo and the government, he decided to deviate from the agenda and familiarize the 213 members of the Central Committee with the text of the draft.[1320] The draft decree provided that, 'effective immediately', the following new 'temporary regulations' would apply to travel and permanent exit abroad. (1) There would no longer by any requirement in the process of application to present supporting documents (e.g., government orders for business trips, private invitations or proof of family connections); (2) no more reliability checks would have to be performed by the regional offices of the Volkspolizei; (3) the offices issuing the visas had to provide the travel documents without delay (*unverzüglich*); and (4) any exit point between East and West Germany, as well as East and West Berlin, could be chosen. The new regulations, according to the draft, would terminate the previous practice of GDR embassies to issue the appropriate travel documents for permanent exit through other countries to East German citizens possessing an identity card. In the discussion at the Central Committee plenum, it was pointed out that the 'temporary' validity of the draft would lead to a flood of travel and exit applications, and that it would be better to delete this provision. A corresponding proposal was adopted and the draft approved without any further changes by the Central Committee.[1321]

1320 Interview with Krenz. For the text of the draft as presented to the Central Committee, see Krenz, *Wenn Mauern fallen*, pp. 180-81.

1321 There is some controversy here about the extent to which the draft was discussed. Krenz conveys the notion that there was ample discussion; Krenz, *Wenn Mauern fallen*, p. 181. Schabowski, based on what CC members told him, thinks that Krenz refrained from pointing out the enormity and the likely consequences of the changes that were envisaged and that he may have done so delib-

Schabowski, the SED secretary for Berlin, had not been present at the discussion of the draft decree. Shortly before 6 p.m. he returned to the CC meeting, was given a copy of the draft and told by Krenz to announce the new regulations at the 7 p.m. press conference. He was conscious of the fact that the draft had been approved by party bodies, that is, by the Politburo and the Central Committee, but not by the government (Council of Ministers), and that his primary task was to explain the proceedings of the CC plenary meeting. It was only at the end of the press conference that a question was put to him concerning travel and permanent exit. Schabowski explained the new provisions as best as he could, wondering, when he came to the part of the text that dealt with the applicability of the decree to the borders in Berlin, whether all of this had been coordinated with the Soviet authorities. However, despite the fact that he was explaining only *draft* provisions, and that cabinet approval was only pending, he announced the regulations as being 'effective immediately'.

The combined effect of the announcement that the GDR authorities had been instructed to issue travel and permanent exit visas without delay and without the usual prerequisites, that the regulations also applied to the borders in Berlin and that the provisions were effective immediately propelled thousands of Berliners into action. They wanted to verify for themselves whether all of this could be true. Confused security guards at the checkpoints, as a consequence, were faced with growing crowds of people. Overwhelmed, the local commanders decided on their own simply to open the borders. At 11 p.m. a bewildered minister of the interior ratified the *fait accompli* and confirmed the commanders' desperate decisions with an official order.[1322]

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erately in order not to provoke unwelcome questions or criticism by what was still a conservative body; Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, p. 306. Maksimychev goes even further (too far, in this writer's view), asserting that the draft was presented 'during a break' in the CC proceedings; that it was hardly discussed because 'everyone was busy doing other things'; and that, consequently, the decision which put an end to the Berlin wall 'was taken hastily and as a result of several misunderstandings'; Maksimychev in *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 10 November 1993.

1322 Krenz has correctly pointed out that, in the evening hours of 9 November, the question was whether to open the borders or use military force. There was no time left for Soviet-East German coordination and to decide which border crossings were to be opened, and when. Action had to be taken swiftly in order to avoid bloodshed and civil war. 'I was aware of the fact that Allied interests were touched. It was also clear to me that our unilateral action in the GDR annulled

To return to the Soviet dimension, embassy officials in East Berlin were unpleasantly surprised by the statements that Schabowski had made at the press conference, above all, by the fact that the checkpoints in West Berlin had been included as possible exit points.[1323] They could not imagine that this could have occurred without Gorbachev's specific approval and assumed that Krenz had contacted the Kremlin directly without their knowledge. But doubts as to whether such approval had, in fact, been given arose early in the morning, on 10 November, before the official beginning of the working day at the embassy. The embassy received a call from the MFA's European socialist countries' department: 'What is happening at the wall? The world's telegraph agencies have gone crazy.' After having been provided with an explanation of the events, the department followed up with a second question: 'Was all this discussed with us?' Erroneously, the Fourth Department thought that it would be easier to get an answer to this question in East Berlin rather than in Moscow. Nevertheless, it persisted in its attempts at clarification and a few minutes later the ambassador received a request to demand explanations from Fischer, whom he immediately called. The East German foreign minister, referring to apparently more pressing business (the continuation of the SED plenary meeting) only remarked: 'What's the point of talking about it now?' Unable to receive a satisfactory reply from Fischer, the embassy called the head of the West Berlin department at the East German foreign ministry, Walter Müller, who provided the following explanation:

> We ask you to understand that the decision taken last night on exit without visas to West Berlin and West Germany was a forced one. Any hesitation would have had very dangerous consequences. There was no time for consultation. Today, we will directly inform Gorbachev about everything. Starting from 8:00 this morning, the regular border crossing regime will be re-established [sic!]. The GDR government requests the embassy to influence the oc-

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the 1961 joint resolution of the member states of the Warsaw treaty on the joint securing of borders. But in the evening of 9 November, I saw no other possibility'; Krenz, 'Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Mauer', p. 369. – For an excellent reconstruction of the fall of the wall, especially the dilemma confronting the East German borders guards, see the 2014 re-enactment produced by the First Channel of German TV, 'Bornholmer Straße', *Daserste.de*, http://www.daserste.de/unterhaltung/film/themenabend-mauerfall/film/index.html.

1323 The account on Soviet reactions to the opening of the Berlin wall is based on Maksimychev, 'Krushenie,' pp. 56-59, and 'Berlinskaia stena', for the most part in *verbatim* translation.

> cupation authorities of the three Western powers in West Berlin with the purpose of maintaining public order at the wall on the West Berlin side.[1324]

Kochemasov also talked to Shevardnadze, who approved the position of the embassy and said that, according to his information, 'there appear to be movements of the [Soviet] military [in East Germany]. It is necessary to make sure that there is full compliance with Moscow's instructions as to 'No action!'" The ambassador at once contacted the chief commander of the Soviet armed forces in East Germany and told him not to move and to avoid contact with the German population. This occurred despite the fact that neither the embassy nor the secret services, then or later, had any information about any action supposedly intended by the Soviet forces. Shevardnadze's concerns were apparently more of a precautionary character. As Müller's communication to the Soviet embassy implied, East German foreign ministry officials – and perhaps others in the party and security services – thought that 'order' would somehow be re-established at the crossing points. If so, these ideas turned out to be erroneous. East German officials also requested that the Soviet embassy address the Western powers with regard to preventing attempts by West Berliners to besiege and cross the wall without any authorization, also to no avail.[1325]

Krenz has asserted that he had informed Gorbachev about the GDR government's plans for the liberalization of travel; that there had been consultation and coordination on the issue; and that the Soviet leadership, therefore, 'could not have been surprised by the opening of the border'.[1326] He also thought that Moscow was divided on the question as to how to react to the opening of the wall. This he inferred from two telephone conversations with the Soviet ambassador. The first telephone call came shortly after 9.00 a.m. on 10 November.

> Kochemasov:Comrade Krenz, Moscow is concerned about the situation at the Berlin wall as it has developed last night.
> Krenz:That surprises me. In principle, we only moved up by a couple of hours what was scheduled for today anyway. Our foreign minister had coordinated [in advance] the travel decrees with the Soviet side.
> Kochemasov:Yes, but this is only partly true. It only applied to the opening of border crossings to the FRG. The opening of the border in Berlin affects the interests of the allies.

1324 Maksimychev, 'Berlinskaia stena'.

1325 Ibid. On the controversy about Soviet military intervention in the fall of 1989, see *above*, pp. 436-37.

1326 Krenz, 'Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Mauer', p. 368.

> Krenz:That was not my understanding of the matter. But this is now merely a theoretical question. Life gave a different answer last night. The opening of the border could only have been stopped by military means. That would have caused a terrible bloodbath.

Kochemasov, according to Krenz, briefly remained silent and then remarked: 'You are right. I see it the same way.' Krenz later said that he was 'angry about the content of the phone call. I asked myself who was playing with marked cards here. On the very 9 November, it had been explained to me that the draft decrees on travel had been coordinated with the Soviet side.'[1327]

Shortly before 10.00 a.m., Kochemasov called a second time. This time, he conveyed a personal message from Gorbachev.

> Kochemasov:Comrade Krenz, on behalf of Mikhail Gorbachev and on behalf of the Soviet leadership I congratulate you and all [our] German friends on your courageous step of opening the Berlin wall.
> Krenz:I sincerely thank you and ask you to thank Mikhail Sergeevich for this solidarity. Convey to him that we are very happy that our views coincide.[1328]

German Unification on the National Agenda

The process of German unification began in earnest after the collapse of the wall, and it began immediately and spontaneously in Berlin. As a sign of the accelerating dynamics, without consultation of the sector commandants in Berlin and the inter-allied *Kommandatura*, the mayors of East and West Berlin met and began discussing the practical consequences of a now, in essence, undivided city. Students from East Berlin and East Germany began enrolling in classes at universities in West Berlin; the prestigious West Berlin *Tagesspiegel* newspaper more than doubled circulation in response to a dramatic increase in demand from East Germany and East Berlin; West Germany's Lufthansa and East Germany's Interflug began making arrangements for new routes; the Volkswagen company, without waiting for new laws on joint ventures, prepared to build a new car with the makers of the East German Trabant; the West German political parties

1327 Quoted by Krenz according to his personal notes of the telephone conversation with Kochemasov on 10 November 1989; Krenz, 'Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Mauer', pp. 368-369.

1328 Ibid.

began looking for counterparts in the East to build up party organizations; and the harbingers of monetary integration appeared in the form of the West German Deutschmark becoming the *de facto* tender among people in East Berlin.

For the East German regime, the collapse of the wall opened a vicious circle. Contrary to expectations, the new regulations on travel and emigration failed to stem the westward exodus of East Germans. Since May of the year, when Budapest had begun dismantling the Iron Curtain, about 60,000 East Germans had left through Hungary. From 3 to 9 November, about 65,000 had emigrated through Czechoslovakia. Before 9 November, a total of 220,000 East Germans had registered in West Germany and West Berlin. After 9 November, in less than two weeks, the number of East Germans registering to remain in West Berlin was 12,500 and, in West Germany, 42,200 people.[1329] As in 1953 and 1961, the majority of the emigrants were young and enterprising members of society, and as in the two previous years of crisis, the downward spiral of the East German economy was thereby accelerated. This, in turn, persuaded even more East Germans to seek a better future in West Germany. It also changed the mood and political direction at the mass demonstrations in East Germany. On 20 November, at the demonstrations in Leipzig, Dresden, Chemnitz, and other East German cities, the defiant slogan of '*Wir sind das Volk*' (We are the people) was being replaced by '*Wir sind ein Volk*' (We are one people, or one nation).[1330]

The fact that Kohl had abandoned the strictures of German Ostpolitik had become obvious even before the opening of the wall. In the traditional state of the nation address, on 8 November, he said: 'We have less reason than ever to be resigned to the long-term division of Germany into two states.' Without, at this stage, explicitly outlining how the division could be overcome, enough was said for anyone to know the general direction: through systemic change in East Germany. This was indicated by his calls for an East-West German dialogue 'with all political forces in the GDR' and his promise of a 'completely new dimension of our economic assistance' if the new regime in East Berlin embarked not merely on 'cosmetic corrections' but instituted 'fundamental reforms' (*grundlegende Refor-*

1329 *New York Times*, 25 November 1989.

1330 Pond, *Beyond the Wall*, p. 135. The change in mood was duly noted by Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 42. – On the failure of KGB's Putin in Dresden to note this change, see pp. 457-61.

men). 'The SED,' he said, 'must give up its power monopoly, allow independent parties and assure binding free elections.'[1331] To the chagrin and fury of both East German and Soviet communist party leaders, the demands were repeated by Kohl in the Bundestag on 16 November and became more insistent as the SED regime became more shaky and vulnerable.[1332] On 17 November, Prime Minister Modrow countered the German chancellor's demands by the announcing a program of internal reforms and outlining a concept on the national question. He rejected as 'unrealistic, as well as dangerous, speculation about reunification' and proposed instead wide-ranging cooperation between the two German states governed by a series of bilateral treaties – a *Vertragsgemeinschaft*, or treaty community.[1333]

Kohl and his advisers considered it important to prevent Modrow's idea from gaining international acceptance. Furthermore, they thought that the time was ripe to present *their* ideas about the path to German unification more clearly and comprehensively than before. Parliamentary elections were scheduled for the following year; taking the initiative now on a vital national issue could serve to differentiate the CDU from both the opposition Social Democrats and the junior partner in the ruling coalition, the Liberals.[1334] It was primarily the last purpose that accounted for the fact that the initiative was being prepared in secrecy. This, in turn, had the effect of not only excluding Genscher (FDP) and the foreign ministry from the drafting process but also of surprising West Germany's Western partners and the Kremlin when the initiative was launched by the chancellor on 28 November in a speech to the Bundestag.[1335] Since his program for

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1331 Text in *Stenographische Berichte des Deutschen Bundestages,* 8 November 1989, pp. 13010-18. For the origin of Kohl's demand for fundamental political change in the GDR, see Pond, *Beyond the Wall*, p. 131.

1332 'Erklärung der Bundesregierung zur Lage in der DDR', Vol. 7 (Bonn: Bundesverlag, 1990), pp. 412-21.

1333 Text in *Neues Deutschland*, 18 November 1989.

1334 The first and second of the three purposes have been described by Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 159 and Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 46-53. The third purpose was only hinted at by Teltschik, who has reported opinions expressed in the CDU presidium to the effect that one had to watch out that the SPD would 'not steal this subject' (German unification) from the CDU; ibid., p. 53.

1335 As a tribute to the special role of and strong support extended by the United States on the unification issue, an exception of sorts was made. Bush was informed by Kohl in general terms on 17 November that an initiative would be

the achievement of German unification (Ten Point Plan) was to lead to a major crisis of confidence in Soviet-West German relations and prompt Gorbachev savagely to attack Genscher when he visited Moscow, it is appropriate briefly to summarize it.[1336]

Point 1. Practical measures should be adopted to deal immediately with some of the issues that had arisen from the opening of the wall. These included the proposal to East Berlin to share the burden for financing the flood of East German visitors to West Berlin and West Germany.

Point 2. There should be a significant expansion of cooperation between the two German states on economic, technological, environmental, and cultural matters; emphasis was put on the improvement of telecommunications and railway connections between the two parts of Germany.

Point 3. West German economic assistance to East Germany would be significantly expanded *if* the new regime would commit itself 'irrevocably' to a 'fundamental change of the political and economic system'. Specifically, the GDR had to change its constitution, admit multiple parties, introduce free elections and abandon central planning. Such demands were described as not being preconditions (*Vorbedingungen*) but objectively necessary so that economic aid could produce the desired effects.

Point 4 explicitly endorsed Modrow's concept of a *Vertragsgemeinschaft*. This was understood by Kohl as the establishment of a close net of contractual relations through inter-governmental cooperation, including the forging of common institutions across all dimensions of policy. The 'treaty community', however, was not considered to be a goal in itself but a transitory form of intra-German relations.

Point 5 introduced the next stage. It provided – after free elections in East Germany – for the creation of 'confederative structures' between the two German states with the ultimate goal of the creation of a federation.

Points 6-9 dealt with the international conditions necessary for the process of German unification to succeed. These included placing the process into the context of European integration; the opening of the European

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forthcoming. The American president was also to receive the text of Kohl's speech together with an explanation of the West German position and interests to be considered in preparation for the Malta summit; Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 158 and 167-68. But this was only on 28 November, as the Ten Point plan was announced to the Bundestag.

1336 Text in *Stenographische Berichte des Deutschen Bundestages,* 28 November 1989, pp. 13508-14.

Community to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; the broadening of cooperation within the CSCE, with the possible creation of new institutions for East-West economic cooperation; and further progress in conventional and nuclear arms control.

Point 10 merely restates the goal of the government as being reunification, that is, the reestablishment of German unity at the state level.

The Ten Points contained little that had not been stated in Kohl's previous two speeches to the Bundestag on 8 and 16 November. Their novelty, as well as their impact lay in the fact that they were presented as a *plan* for the achievement of German unity in several stages of development. Kohl had refrained from indicating a time frame, saying in his introduction to the program that 'The road to German unification, we all know that, cannot be planned at the drawing board or with a calendar in hand.'[1337] (Privately, he thought that German unity might be achieved within five to ten years.)[1338] But the failure to consult or inform domestic and international partners conveyed the notion that West Germany was now determined to speed up the process towards reunification. It reinforced the concern abroad that a unified Germany would be prone to act unilaterally; that it would be the dominant country in Europe; and that it would return to Great Power policies. The German problem, therefore, yet again became the central issue on the international agenda.

5. German Unification on the International Agenda

The prospect of German reunification had been a topic of international discussion in the fall of 1989. But the opening of the Berlin wall advanced the discussion of reunification from a mere theoretical possibility to the single most important topic on the agenda of international politics. This was evident in the preparations for and discussions at the summit conference of the European Community leaders in Paris on 18 November; the Soviet-American summit in Malta on 2-3 December; the summit meetings of the two military alliances, of NATO in Brussels and of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow, both on 4 December; the meeting between Gorbachev and Mitterrand in Kiev on 6 December; and the summit conference of the EC's

1337 In German, '*ist nicht vom grünen Tisch oder mit einem Terminkalender in der Hand zu planen*.'

1338 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 52.

European Council in Strasbourg on 8 December. The most important features of these meetings and of the private exchanges between its major participants were the reservations and hesitations by Prime Minister Thatcher and President Mitterrand on the one hand, and the determined drive towards the achievement of German unity by both Chancellor Kohl and President Bush on the other.

As for the Soviet Union, Gorbachev and his supporters have argued that – in the period from the opening of the wall on 9-10 November until the end of January 1990 – their primary concern was not the prevention of unification but the management of a process that could have gotten out of control and led to unpredictable consequences. Support for this argument could be found in the fact that Gorbachev refrained from adopting the kind of forceful measures at the military level but also at the political and diplomatic level that would have been necessary to arrest the inexorable movement towards German unity. The means to do so were still available to him in the form of the presence of substantial Soviet military forces in East Germany. But the Gorbachevian interpretation is credible only up to a point. After all, his preferences were clear: East Germany's transformation from a moribund, orthodox system to a viable, reform socialist country. To that extent he was *against* unification. It is, therefore, not convincing to argue that his negative attitude towards German unification was essentially tactical and temporary, embarked upon under the assumption that the GDR and with it the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe were irretrievably lost. Until the end of 1989 it was still unclear, certainly to Gorbachev, whether the reform experiment in the GDR would fail. If it had succeeded, the purportedly provisional support for a reformist GDR could have lasted a long time. It could have turned the wide-spread idea in both Eastern and Western Europe of the 1970s and 1980s that the division of Germany was here to stay from a possibility into reality.

In detail, as for the Soviet leadership's reactions to the opening of the wall, it was − as on most issues demanding a radical departure − Yakovlev who adopted the most advanced position. On 15 November, he called the accelerating democratization movement in Eastern Europe, including the dismantling of the Berlin wall, moves in the right direction. The Soviet Union, he told the Japanese prime minister, would not interfere in the processes of change. In conversation with Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) Chairwoman Takako Doi, he went even further and said that the Soviet Union would not interfere with moves by East and West Germany to reunite. '*The decision is for the Germans themselves to make.*' He also indi-

cated that Britain, France, and the United States were wary of reunification and were trying to persuade the Soviet Union to slow down the process, thereby *de facto* cautioning his colleagues in Moscow not to lend a helping hand to such Western efforts.[1339]

Shevardnadze and the foreign ministry, in contrast, *were* attempting to slow down the momentum towards German unification. In talks with Roland Dumas, the French foreign minister, on 14 November in Moscow, he said:

> Great anxiety is caused by attempts being undertaken by certain circles in West Germany to place the issue of reunification of Germany on today's political agenda. What we have here is a matter that affects the vital interests of many European countries. We are seeing a desire to question the existence of a sovereign state, the German Democratic Republic, and also the territorial and political structure of the continent as a whole.[1340]

The principal means to assure stability on the continent, in his view, was 'the gradual rapprochement of the eastern and western parts of Europe'.[1341] Soviet foreign ministry spokesman Gerasimov also propagated this line. Furthermore, he provided one of the first negative, perhaps anticipatory or pre-emptive, reactions to possible changes in the alliance systems and the balance of power in Europe. 'Politically', he warned, 'now is not the time to talk about reunification. The two Germanys belong to two different military blocs.' It was impossible to talk realistically about reunification as long as there were 'American, British, French, even Canadian troops in West Germany'. Conversely, Gerasimov continued, the GDR is a 'strategic ally' of the Soviet Union and certainly 'more important geographically than Hungary'. To convert the GDR into a neutral Austria was just hypothetical. 'Why should East Germany be considered an Austria when this is our firm ally? The NATO forces are dangerous and to compensate we should count on the Warsaw Pact.'[1342]

1339 'Soviets Won't Oppose German Reunification', Jiji Press Ltd., Tokyo, 15 November 1989 (italics mine).

1340 Bill Keller, 'Gorbachev Urges West to Show Restraint on Turmoil in Eastern Europe', *New York Times*, 15 November 1989.

1341 Ibid.

1342 At a press briefing in Moscow after the GDR's lifting of travel and emigration restrictions, as quoted by Esther B. Fein, 'The Kremlin Reacts Calmly, But Says Border Must Stay', *New York Times*, 11 November 1989, and David Remnick, 'Soviets Warn Against Reunification', *Washington Post*, 11 November 1989.

Gorbachev shared these viewpoints. This is reflected in a plethora of public and private statements. These included letters sent to Bush, Thatcher and Mitterrand on 10 November. In the letter to the American president, he expressed the fear that 'a chaotic situation may emerge with unforeseeable consequences' and warned against the danger of 'political extremism' in West Germany. In particular, he thought that

> when statements are made in the FRG designed to stir up emotions, in the spirit of implacable rejection of the post-war realities, that is, the existence of two German states, then such manifestations of political extremism can only be seen as aimed at undermining the current dynamic processes of democratization and renewal of all aspects of the society's life. And, looking ahead, this can bring about a destabilization of the situation not only in Central Europe, but on a larger scale.[1343]

The practical political consequence he derived from such dangers was to call for the immediate convocation of a Four Power meeting.

The appeal to Four Power action and his concerns about political extremism in West Germany, however, were lacking in a telephone conversation with Chancellor Kohl, on 11 November. The German chancellor, in his rendering of its content, assured Gorbachev that the government had no interest in chaos in the GDR; that it did not want to deplete the GDR of its population because this would lead to severe economic problems; the people should stay in their homeland and this they would do if conditions in the GDR were to change fundamentally.[1344] Gorbachev acknowledged that the changes that had occurred in Eastern Europe since they had last met (in June 1989) had been much more rapid than expected. Differences were evolving in the speed, depth and form of the changes. As for the GDR, it needed more time for its transformation in the direction of freedom, democracy and economic viability. He then continued:

> Instability is inherent in any change. This is why, when I talk about maintaining stability, I mean that in every respect we should take well-thought out steps in relation to each other. Today, an historical turn is taking place towards new relations and towards a different world. We should take care not to put this turn at risk by awkward (*neukliuzhimie*) actions. I hope, Helmut, that you will use your authority and your political weight and influence, that other po-

1343 State Department document 363047, 11 November 1989, cited by Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 107.

1344 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 141. Later in the conversation, Kohl also expressed understanding for the difficulties of the new leadership in East Berlin and acknowledged that reforms could not be achieved overnight.

> litical leaders will remain within the framework appropriate for the present time and its demands.[1345]

Kohl, in Gorbachev's version of the conversation, had replied that a cabinet meeting had just been concluded in Bonn and that if he (Gorbachev) had been present, he would have realized that he would 'probably have been surprised by how much our assessments coincide'.[1346] The congruence of views, however, is not confirmed by Kohl and Teltschik. *They* report the chancellor as having told Gorbachev that if he had been present at the meeting, 'you could have convinced yourself that policy on Germany in the Federal Republic is being conducted with a sense of measure'.[1347]

Gorbachev, indeed, would most likely *not* have found a congruence of views. Differences of perception and policy, as it turned out, remained hidden – despite or perhaps because of the cordiality of the conversation. First, whereas Gorbachev had in mind stability and change towards reform socialism in the GDR, Kohl's vision transcended the division of Germany. Second, whereas Gorbachev may have thought that he had received commitments by the German chancellor to the effect that he would cooperate in slowing down the momentum of change, Kohl concluded from the conversation that Gorbachev had agreed to let the people of the GDR decide their own fate, irrespective of the speed of change. Third, whereas the two leaders had indeed agreed to consult each other if required by the circumstances, it was unclear what such circumstances might be.

Gorbachev's reactions, furthermore, were shaped by wishful thinking and an astounding misreading of developments. This became apparent in a meeting on 16 November with the parliamentary leaders of West Germany and France that lasted several hours and dealt almost exclusively with events in Germany. There was no reason to dramatize things, Gorbachev

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1345 Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 2, p. 164. This part of the conversation was recorded essentially identically by Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 141-43; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 28, and Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym,* p. 305.

1346 Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 2, p. 164.

1347 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 141-43; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 28. The term used is *Augenmaß*. Similarly, the record of the conversation transmitted to East Berlin stated only that 'Kohl agreed with Gorbachev's point of view [literally: *Ausführungen*]. According to him [Kohl] this problem was discussed along these lines at the cabinet meeting'; Information über den Inhalt des Telephongesprächs zwischen Michail Gorbatschow und Helmut Kohl, 13 November 1989, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2A/3258.

mused. He was, of course, aware of the never-ending procession of cars (the East German Trabants, or Trabbies) streaming across the various border checkpoints in Berlin. But this was only natural given the fact that travel and emigration had been denied to the East Germans for such a long time and that the decision by the new leadership in East Berlin to open the borders had long been overdue. No state should deny rights of free movement to its citizens. However, he continued, the East Germans simply wanted to get an impression of what things were like in the West. They were *not* going to turn their backs on the GDR. The novelty of their being able to exercise new rights and the attractions of the West would wear off.[1348]

The next opportunity for Gorbachev to shape the debate and decisions on the German problem presented itself in Italy, at the end of November, en route to the Malta summit. Soviet-American relations would obviously be the central focus of the discussions. But Gorbachev and his entourage, both prior to and during the summit, were very much under the impression of the rapidly unfolding 'velvet revolution' in Czechoslovakia. In mid-November, demonstrators in Prague had brutally been beaten. Undeterred, the anti-communist opposition had formed the Civic Forum and over the next two weeks had organized a series of mass demonstrations and strikes that quickly swept away the orthodox communist party leadership under Miloš Jakeš in both Eastern and Western Europe and forced the government to agree to round-table discussions with the Civic Forum, to expunge

1348 Participants in the meeting included, in addition to Gorbachev, the presidents of the Bundestag, Rita Süssmuth; of the Assemblée Nationale, Laurent Fabius; of the Supreme Soviet, Anatoli Lukyanov; and of the Union Soviet, the upper house of parliament, Yevgeni Primakov. Information on the meeting was provided to this author by Wolfgang Ischinger, present at the meeting in his capacity as German foreign service official responsible for parliamentary liaison. It is possible that Gorbachev developed this unrealistic notion in part as a result of his telephone conversation with Kohl on 11 November. The record of the conversation transmitted to East Berlin stated: 'Chancellor [Kohl] admitted that the majority of the GDR citizens, which had crossed the borders to the FRG did not want to stay there permanently [and] avowed that the leadership of the FRG was not striving for that to happen. In his words, a mass resettlement in the FRG would be an absurd development. "We want the Germans to build their future in their own home."' Information über den Inhalt des Telephongesprächs zwischen Michail Gorbatschow und Helmut Kohl, 13 November 1989, SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2A/3258.

the communist party's monopoly from the constitution and to embark on comprehensive political and economic reform.

To put the events in context, Poland and Hungary were well on the road to rejecting rather than reforming socialism. The mood in East Germany, as noted, was changing demands for unification rapidly increasing. Czechoslovakia was following the very same pattern observable in the neighbouring countries, with evolution turning into revolution. It appears, however, that Gorbachev failed to understand the inexorable drift in Eastern Europe towards the collapse of communism. In Czechoslovakia, he thought, the conditions for the successful introduction of reform socialism were promising since that country was not encumbered by external debts and, in contrast to the Soviet Union, did not suffer from food supply problems.[1349] Hence, it was not only for tactical political reasons but also because of genuine conviction that, on 30 November in Rome, he publicly dismissed the Western raptures about the alleged victory of capitalism in the cold war as mere anti-communist propaganda and rudiments of old thinking. Socialism was not coming to an end but taking various forms in its further evolution. The dramatic processes of change were only now 'unleashing the tremendous human and democratic potential inherent in that system'. It was fitting to remember, he said, that the history of capitalism had encompassed many centuries and had known bloody revolutions, terrible wars, sharp political crises and economic depressions, even fascism. Socialism, contrary to that, had existed only for a few decades.[1350] The implication of this defiant reaction to Western glee was obviously that socialism in Europe had several more centuries ahead of it.

Gorbachev also outlined how the processes of change should be managed. He restated his vision of the Common European Home and, in order to strengthen pan-European cooperation, proposed to convene a summit meeting of the leaders of the thirty-five CSCE member states (Helsinki 2), to be held in 1990. Should the CSCE, then, be empowered to deal also with the vexing German problem? Perhaps this was the implication of the proposal. But Gorbachev refrained from establishing such a link.[1351] In his prepared speeches – in Rome and, on the following day, in Milan – he stu-

1349 Interview with Shakhnazarov; see also *id*., *Tsena svobody*, p. 109.

1350 Speech in Rome on 30 November, 'Za meniaiushchiisia is stabil'nyi mir. Rech' M.S. Gorbacheva', *Pravda*, 1 December 1989.

1351 Zelikow and Rice speak of a 'major proposal', and they convey the notion that Gorbachev directly linked the CSCE and the German problem; Zelikow and

diously avoided mentioning Germany. It was only at the press conference in Milan, and only in response to a question by an Italian journalist about German reunification, that he repeated the familiar contradictory refrain: history had already decided but history might decide otherwise. Political leaders, however, should not touch the issue: '*Today, to put the problem of reunification on the agenda of international politics would be inappropriate. Moreover, it would complicate the situation*.'[1352]

Prior to the Soviet-American summit meeting on Malta, then, Gorbachev had conveyed three different notions about how he might deal with the German problem: (1) manage the process in a Four Power framework; (2) discuss the problem at a CSCE summit conference; and (3) do nothing. At the summit, to the extent that there was clarification, it was that there was no Soviet concept on how to manage the German problem and that the third course of action, that of *inaction*, was the option preferred by Gorbachev. This impression, formed by both Soviet and American participants at the summit, was reinforced by the fact that the German topic, its central importance notwithstanding, was only one of many others discussed. These included Western versus all-human, democratic values; political developments in the Soviet Union; the situation in the Baltic repjublics; East-West economic relations; conventional and strategic arms control; chemical weapons; the US 'open skies' proposal; and regional conflicts (Afghanistan, Central America and the Middle East).[1353] In fact, Gorbachev made a deliberate attempt to *downplay* the German issue. This is also evident in his memoirs. He writes that he had told Bush that there was too much haste in connection with the events in Germany. Reunification was a very serious matter and hence it was necessary to act with care. The process could perhaps not be stopped. But it should also not be artificially accelerated.[1354] Bush had replied that even the most conservative Western political leaders agreed with such an approach and that he would

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Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 126-27. The former opinion is debatable but the latter is erroneous.

1352 'Press konferentsiia v Milane', *Pravda*, 3 December 1989 (italics mine). He also said: 'One should not push and force processes that have not ripened.'

1353 According to the extensive account of the Malta summit in Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 2, pp. 142-49, and *id*., *Gody trudnykh reshenii*, pp. 173-76. Other primary sources used for this part are the accounts by Chernyaev, *Shest let s Gorbachevym,* pp. 301-10; Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata*, pp. 253-54, 259; and Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 630.

1354 Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 2, p. 146.

'not jump on the wall because too much is at stake in the situation'. He (Gorbachev) had reiterated his 'Helsinki 2' proposal in order to deal with a new phase in East-West relations and to turn NATO and the Warsaw Pact into political rather than military organizations.[1355] His account, as well as that of other participants in the conference, shows that he refrained again from establishing a direct link between this proposal and the German issue. To that extent, it is fair to conclude that the most important feature of the Malta summit lay in the *absence* of any decision on the German or any other major international problem and in the congenial atmosphere of the discussions – in mutual assurances to exercise restraint and, as secretary of state (foreign minister) James Baker summarized, in enabling Bush and Gorbachev 'to establish a personal bond,' which became critical as 'through the spring of 1990 we worked to bring a unified Germany into NATO.'[1356]

Two members of the Soviet delegation would severely criticize Gorbachev for this off-hand and hands-off attitude: ambassador Dobrynin and Marshal Akhromeev. According to the former Soviet ambassador's observations, President Bush had 'cautiously sounded out Gorbachev on reunification in casual conversation'. He (Gorbachev) had 'responded in a general way' that Soviet policy was founded on adherence to an all-European process and the construction of a Common European Home, in which the security interests of all countries should be respected. But he had not specified how this could or should be done, although he had with him a confidential MFA memorandum outlining a concrete policy: German reunification should be the final product of a gradual transformation of the political climate in Europe, in the course of which both NATO and the Warsaw Pact would shift their orientation from military to political purposes and be dissolved by mutual agreement.[1357]

Akhromeev was even more critical.[1358] He noted that the 'discussion of what may very well have been the most important question at that time,

1355 Ibid.; similarly, Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 310.

1356 Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 169-70.

1357 Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 630. The confidential foreign ministry memorandum, to which Dobrynin referred, has not been published. Nevertheless except for the suggestion that German reunification *should* be the end result of the evolution of the CSCE process (it is doubtful that the MFA had, in fact, put it that way), all the other ideas were mentioned by Gorbachev.

1358 Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata*, p. 253.

the situation in Europe and Germany, was scheduled for the final stage of the negotiations'. He reflected on the reason why this may have been the case: 'On our part, I think, this was *due to the fact that our position on the question of German unification had not yet been formulated*.'[1359] Little more than a month had passed since the departure of Honecker and his closest advisors from the leadership of the GDR, he continued. Events in the GDR had developed rapidly, and no less rapidly was the Soviet Union losing its influence in that country. Despite that, 'Mikhail Gorbachev arrived at the Malta meeting *without a defined long-term plan for dealing with the German problem*.'[1360]

He thought that the absence of a Soviet position and a long-term plan on the German problem was causing some problems for the United States because

> understanding the posture of the Soviet Union towards the emerging idea of union between East and West Germany was one of the foremost [American] goals of the Malta summit. Because of this, George Bush, while expressing satisfaction as well as awe at the rapid changes taking place in the countries of Central Europe, and in East Germany in particular, spoke of the United States' satisfaction with the moderation of the position of the Soviet Union with regard to these changes. He relentlessly grilled Gorbachev as to which position the Soviet Union would take with regard to the possible unification of Germany. It was clear that the answer to this question would, in large part, determine the future US policy toward the problem of German unification as well as the relations with the Soviet Union in 1990.

Akhromeev concluded by saying that Gorbachev avoided giving a definitive answer to this question and explains why.

> His [Gorbachev's] reasoning stemmed from the belief that it was necessary to resolve European problems as a whole within the framework of the Helsinki accords of 1975, which guaranteed the sanctity of borders in Europe, including the borders between the GDR and the FRG. He proposed, due to the fact that the situation in Europe was unclear, to have Eduard Shevardnadze and James Baker work on the European question more substantively and thus also to tackle the German problem.[1361]

1359 Ibid. (italics mine). It is unclear what Akhromeev meant by 'scheduled'. To the extent that Germany was discussed at all, it was also discussed on the first day.

1360 Ibid.

1361 Ibid. To comment again on Akhromeev's portrayal, the author accurately speaks of a general belief by Gorbachev to solve European issues in the Helsinki framework but not of a specific corresponding proposal tied to the German problem.

The criticism is taken one step further in the joint analysis by Akhromeev and Kornienko. They enumerate various opportunities missed by the foreign ministry and other agencies, and that these included the failure by Gorbachev to discuss the question of Germany with Bush at the Malta summit and shortly thereafter at the meeting with Mitterrand in Kiev. But they consider it even more inexcusable that there was no defined Soviet position on this topic even at the meeting with Chancellor Kohl in Moscow in February 1990.[1362]

Gorbachev, Genscher, and Kohl's 'Diktat'

It is a matter of political preference whether one should interpret Gorbachev's attitude on the German problem as a deliberate policy of non-interference or a deplorable lack of defined position. Whatever the preference, on 5 December the Soviet president abruptly abandoned the philosophical musing on the German issue. This occurred in talks with Genscher in Moscow, described by the German foreign minister as the 'most unpleasant meeting' he had ever had with the General Secretary. 'Never before or thereafter had I seen Gorbachev so agitated and bitter.'[1363] Chernyaev has concurred, saying that the meeting 'went far beyond the bounds generally accepted in the relations among government leaders of that rank'.[1364] The bone of contention were Kohl's Ten Points.

The Malta summit had presented Gorbachev with the opportunity to discuss and, if necessary, to criticize Kohl's initiative. Gorbachev had not used that opportunity. This had been the case despite the fact that, as he has written, he had considered the Ten Point plan an inappropriate response to the requirements of the times because the impression was being created that the German chancellor was subordinating interests of historic significance to the exigencies of the upcoming parliamentary elections in West Germany, an impression which Gorbachev regarded as having been confirmed by Kohl's failure to inform not only his European allies but also

1362 Ibid.
1363 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 684.
1364 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 308. For reasons difficult to fathom, his account of the Gorbachev-Genscher exchanges were not included in the German version of his memoirs.

his own foreign minister.[1365] Prior to the Gorbachev-Genscher exchanges, the Soviet foreign minister had prepared his German counterpart for things to come, warning him that Gorbachev was very upset and predicting that the upcoming meeting was hardly likely to be pleasant.[1366] As the meeting was to confirm, the Soviet president was well briefed by the then still influential *germanisty* of the foreign ministry and the Central Committee.[1367]

Gorbachev welcomed Genscher, saying that events had given the visit a particular coloration.[1368] He called his guest a privileged discussion partner and said that he knew him well and regarded him highly, and that it was precisely for that reason that he felt he could speak openly and directly, and raise difficult subjects. Genscher conveyed regards from the German president and from the chancellor, and proceeded to dwell on the transformation that had occurred in East-West relations, the irreversibility of the changes, and the necessity for policy-makers to proceed carefully and responsibly. West German policy was based on the treaties concluded with the Soviet Union, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, the Basic Treaty with East Germany, and the (June 1989) Soviet-German Joint Declaration. The

1365 Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 2, pp. 163-64.

1366 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 683.

1367 Interview with Zagladin. Kvitsinsky remembers that, at the end of November or the beginning of December, he had briefly been recalled from Bonn to help prepare an interdepartmental paper on upcoming negotiations with the East German government; Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, p. 17. Falin was responsible for the Central Committee input.

1368 Present at the meeting were, on the Soviet side, Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, and Zagladin, and, on the German side, in addition to Genscher, the foreign ministry's political director, Dieter Kastrup, and the head of the presidential office, Klaus Blech. This account of the meeting is based on what is apparently a transcript of the meeting in possession of the Gorbachev Foundation, 'Zapis' besedy M.S. Gorbacheva s ministrom inostrannykh del FRG F.-D. Genscherom, 5 dekabria 1989 goda', Hoover Institution Archives, Box 3, Zelikow-Rice Project on German Unification; the memoirs by Gorbachev, Genscher, and Chernyaev; and personal interviews with Zagladin and Blech. Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 135-37, have aptly summarized Gorbachev's attack on Kohl's ten-point program based on these sources, with the exception of Gorbachev's and Genscher's memoirs, which were unavailable to the authors at the time of their writing.

Federal Republic was not entering upon a separate German road, he said, but was fully integrated in the European Community.[1369]

Gorbachev replied that a difference needed to be made between political philosophy and practical steps. Concerning the latter, he failed to understand Chancellor Kohl and his intentions towards East Germany as expressed in the Ten Points. 'One has to conclude, frankly speaking, that they are demands having the character of an ultimatum put to an independent and sovereign German state.' [1370] Kohl had assured him in the telephone conversation (on 11 November) that he did not want to destabilize the situation in the GDR and that he would act with circumspection and only after consultation. Now it seemed that the German chancellor no longer needed this understanding. 'Perhaps he thinks that his melody, the melody of his march, is already playing and he is already marching to it.' There was no point to engage in diplomatic niceties. 'If you want to cooperate with us, we are ready for it. If not, we will draw the appropriate conclusions.'[1371]

Gorbachev, with Shevardnadze's vigorous support, in particular objected to two points of the Ten Point program. The first was the idea of establishing a confederation. Only yesterday, he said, Kohl had asserted that Bush supported the idea.

1369 There are two major discrepancies here between the Soviet transcript and Genscher's memoirs. The *first* concerns the terms 'stability' and 'stabilization.' Whereas Genscher fails to mention these terms even once, the Soviet transcript shows five usages. Genscher allegedly had spoken of West German policy as being aimed at the (1) 'creation of a stable framework for reform in Central and Eastern Europe'; (2) the 'stabilization of the situation by means of the development of relations with the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and the GDR; (3) turning the Helsinki process into a 'guarantee of stability on the continent'; (4) 'enhancing stability in Europe and the rapprochement of its states and peoples'; and (5) allocating a 'stabilizing function' to the two military alliances; 'Zapis besedy s Genscherom', p. 33. The *second* is about German unification. Genscher asserts that he had spoken of the necessity of the two states to grow together (*Zusammenwachsen*) within European structures and developments; that the Letter on German Unity (August 1970) had unambiguously posited the West German goal as being German unification; and that Moscow could at no time have been in doubt about this goal. Neither the transcripts nor Gorbachev's and Chernyaev's memoirs make any reference to this.

1370 'Zapis' besedy s Genscherom', p. 34. Contrary to what he was to claim later (see *infra*), at least according to the transcript, Gorbachev did not explicitly use the term *diktat*.

1371 'Zapis' besedy s Genscherom', pp. 34-35.

> What next? What is meant by confederation? Does confederation envisage a common defense, a common foreign policy? Where would the FRG be – in NATO or in the Warsaw Pact? Or will it perhaps become neutral? But what would NATO be without the FRG? And, in general, what will happen further? Have you thought all of this through?

Shevardnadze interjected, saying that '*Today, this style [in West German policy] is being adopted towards the GDR, tomorrow perhaps towards Poland and Czechoslovakia, and then – towards Austria.*'[1372]

The second point that Gorbachev fiercely attacked, quoting verbatim from Kohl's speech to the Bundestag, was the idea that West Germany would be prepared to embark on an entirely new dimension of aid if East Germany irrevocably changed its political and economic system. This he considered to be quite unacceptable. 'What else is that but the most blatant interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state?' he asked. Shevardnadze again interjected: *'Even Hitler didn't permit himself this.'* Gorbachev resumed the attack and, among other things, called Kohl's demand for the liquidation of the bureaucratic command economy and the opening of its doors to Western investment *'simply double-dyed revanchism.'*[1373] Gorbachev's perceptions of Kohl, it would seem, had reverted to the period from the chancellor's Goebbels remark to the meetings of October 1988 and June 1989. In fact, the deliberate display of irritation with Kohl and the irksome German problem found its expression in similar reactions to the German chancellor's attempts, for instance, in a lengthy letter of 14 December, to clarify the Ten Points and his suggestion 'to meet soon in the new year in an informal setting and at a place of your choosing'.[1374] In a letter of his own to Kohl, Gorbachev reiterated his position, without referring to the clarification and the invitation.[1375]

1372 'Zapis' besedy s Genscherom', p. 34 (italics mine)..

1373 Ibid., pp. 34-35 (italics mine).

1374 Cited by Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 193-94.

1375 This was interpreted in Bonn as the letters having crossed each other; ibid., p. 209, and Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 85. Neither Kohl nor Teltschik mention the date of Gorbachev's letter, only that they saw it on 18 December, after their return from Hungary. However, the interpretation of the letters having crossed each other is not very convincing: Kohl's letter was dispatched on 14 December and he then left for a three-day visit to Hungary on 16 December. No letter had arrived in Bonn before his departure. Thus, the time interval of two days should have been sufficient time for Gorbachev in *his* letter at least to acknowledge receipt of the letter from Kohl.

How is one to interpret the vehement attack on the Ten Points and the demonstrative displeasure with Kohl? One possible explanation is that of a spontaneous emotional outburst. It could be argued that Gorbachev was lashing out at Genscher in frustration and anger caused by the convergence of mounting political problems, deterioration of economic conditions and rising nationality conflicts in the Soviet Union, and uncontrollable events in Eastern Europe. As his former chief of staff has observed, 'Gorbachev was increasingly tired and irritable during the last two years of his tenure, losing his temper often'.[1376] Such outbursts by top leaders, furthermore, were not uncommon in the internal intercourse in the Soviet era, and Gorbachev had permitted himself on several occasions to follow that pattern.[1377] But they were quite uncommon in talks with Western leaders. Nevertheless, in the international domain, too, examples of excessive and unreasonable behaviour by Gorbachev can be found. For instance, when he and Shevardnadze had met with Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney in Moscow shortly prior to Kohl's speech to the Bundestag the Soviet leader had accused the American ambassador in Bonn (Vernon Walters), an outspoken supporter of German unification, of 'acting like a German *Gauleiter*'.[1378] But whereas frustration about loss of control domestically and internationally may have played a role in Gorbachev's behaviour, the outburst in conversation with Genscher was by no means spontaneous. The Soviet leader, as noted, was not only well briefed, quoting verbatim from the Ten Point plan, but also – judging from Shevardnadze's advance warning to Genscher – determined to dispense with the customary diplomatic conventions and convey a strong message. Even if the eruption was deliberate, the question still needs to be answered what prompted it.

One possible explanation is to be found in the Gorbachev-Kohl telephone conversation of 11 November and the genuine or pretended differences in interpretation of its content. The emphasis Gorbachev chose to put on the telephone conversation was that there was a congruence of views and a mutual commitment to consult each other, to act responsibly, to exercise restraint and to contribute to the stabilization of conditions in

1376 Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World*, p. 262.

1377 One of the examples, Gorbachev's rude treatment of Sakharov, was mentioned *above,* fn. 1133.

1378 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany United*, p. 124, based on the memcon of a dinner between Bush and Mulroney, 29 November 1989.

the GDR. Kohl had concurred with the necessity to prevent chaos in East Germany, but he had also contended that this was possible only if fundamental reforms were to be adopted by its new leadership.[1379] To highlight the difference of view, whereas Gorbachev wanted to stabilize the new regime, Kohl aimed at stable *conditions* in East Germany under a *new system*.

Another reason for the acrimonious exchanges lay in Gorbachev's perceived link between West German domestic politics and change in East Germany. On this issue, too, he was well briefed. His attack on Genscher is littered with references to Kohl's initiative as having been motivated by the upcoming parliamentary elections and as demonstrating the subordination of responsible international conduct to the electoral campaign. In allusion to presumed or genuine policy differences between the CDU and the FDP, he professed to be astonished that Genscher, not having been informed of the initiative by Kohl, would act as a policy advocate for the chancellor. The Ten Points, of course, had an important domestic political dimension. But Gorbachev chose to disbelieve Genscher's explanation that Kohl's initiative had found wide-spread support not only in the Bundestag and among the West German public but also in East Germany, and that at issue was not the subordination of national interests to party politics but their *alignment.*

Yet another reason for the fierce attack may lie in Soviet internal politics and, more broadly, future perceptions of Gorbachev's role in history. By December 1989, his position as master of the Kremlin notwithstanding, Gorbachev had to cope with the Sorcerer's Apprentice syndrome, with the increasing perception domestically that he had set in motion processes that he was unable to control – an extremely dangerous image to present in the Soviet context. The consistent pattern of non-interference was making him vulnerable to charges of inactivity and incompetence, to the liquidation of the GDR either by criminal design along the lines of Beria or, equally damaging, by criminal neglect. Concern about such perceptions had briefly surfaced in his remark to Mitterrand that the day Germany was unified, 'a Soviet marshal will be sitting in my chair' and to Kochemasov that 'Our people will never forgive us if we lose the GDR.'[1380]

1379 Gorbachev, *Zhizn*', Vol. 2, p. 164; 'Zapis' besedy s Genscherom', p. 34; Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 141-43.

1380 The remark to Mitterrand, as quoted by Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 137. The remark to Kochemasov as reported by Maximychev, 'Possible "Impos-

If domestic purposes were one of the factors underlying the harsh line Gorbachev had taken with Genscher, one would expect to find indications of such purposes in the Soviet leader's public statements. There, a delicate balance had to be struck. To convey the new image of being tough on Kohl and seemingly in control of events was certainly advantageous politically but revelation of the full extent of the acrimonious exchanges with Genscher and the intended pressures on Kohl could have *reinforced* rather than mitigated domestic perceptions that his policies had been ineffective and that he had indeed lost control – and his composure. To complicate matters, a decision on how to proceed had to be made on the spot since Genscher had asked him directly at the end of the meeting how both sides should characterize the talks. The Soviet transcript and Genscher's memoirs provide different accounts of the reply. The German foreign minister's memoirs have Gorbachev answering that the time for making his assessment public had not yet arrived.[1381] According to the Soviet transcript, he (Gorbachev) suggested specific language that recurs almost verbatim in the subsequent TASS report. This includes the wording that the talks had been 'frank and comprehensive', as well as 'open and direct', and that Gorbachev had emphasized that 'the Soviet Union considers the German Democratic Republic a reliable ally and an important guarantor of peace and stability in Europe and will extend to it solidarity and support'.[1382] Corroborating the interpretation of domestic purposes, the ringing declaration of support for East Germany was repeated by Gorbachev in a speech to the Central Committee on 9 December. 'We would like to emphasize with all determination,' he said, 'that *we will let no harm come to the GDR. It is our strategic ally and member of the Warsaw Pact*.' To ignore

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sibilities"', pp. 112-13; similarly Kotschemassow, *Meine letzte Mission*, p. 110. There are some discrepancies as to the date when the latter remark was made, whether in October or November. The date, however, is immaterial. The concern about the likely domestic consequences of the loss of the GDR was a constant preoccupation.

1381 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 686.

1382 'Vstrecha M.S. Gorbacheva s G.-D. Genscherom' (TASS report), *Pravda*, 6 December 1989, and 'Zapis' besedy s Genscherom', p. 36. There are only slight variations in the wording. The TASS report uses the wording 'direct, frank and comprehensive', and Gorbachev's suggested 'true' (*vernyi*) ally was turned into a 'reliable' (*nadezhnyi*) ally.

the realities that had developed after the Second World War carried the risk of a 'destabilization of Europe'.[1383]

A probable contributory factor for such a seemingly unequivocal commitment to the GDR was the summit meeting of the Warsaw Pact that had taken place in Moscow on the preceding day and the separate talks between Gorbachev and Modrow on that occasion.[1384] The composition of the East German delegation reflected the accelerating pace of change in East Berlin – and put the Soviet leadership in a quandary. Krenz and the SED Politburo had been forced to resign on 3 December. Krenz was still included in the delegation but no longer in his capacity as party chief but as head of state and chairman of the defense council, positions from which he would step down immediately after his return from Moscow. Thus, pending the election of a new party leadership and program at an extraordinary congress, to begin on 8 December, the SED was in a state of disarray. In the circumstance, the Soviet leaders decided to treat Modrow, the prime minister and simultaneously their preferred candidate for the top party position, as the head of the delegation. In consequence, *he* rather than Krenz was given the floor at the Warsaw Pact summit and identified in the press as the main discussion partner in private conversation (arranged by Falin) with Gorbachev.[1385]

1383 Gorbachev delivered two speeches to the Central Committee, one dealing primarily with domestic affairs, the other with the results of the Malta summit. The quotation can be found in the former, 'Vystuplenie M.S. Gorbacheva na Plenume TsK KPSS po voprosam II S''ezda narodnykh deputatov SSSR', *Pravda*, 10 December 1989 (italics mine). The Russian term used for 'strategic ally' was, as usual, *strategicheskii soiuznik*.

1384 In fact, as Genscher was being driven from the airport to Moscow, he saw the caravan of vehicles with the East German delegation stopped close to the airport, on the opposite side of the road. Shevardnadze, apparently still involved in the wrap-up of the Warsaw Pact summit but perhaps also as a sign of displeasure with the West German government, had failed to appear at the airport. Instead, it was Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoli Adamishin who had met the West German foreign minister and who had pointed out the caravan with the East German leadership. Genscher surmised that the vehicles had deliberately been halted in order to preclude that he would meet, or meet with, the East German leadership; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 682.

1385 Hans Modrow, *Aufbruch und Ende* (Hamburg: Konkret Literatur Verlag, 1991), pp. 48, 92; *id*., 'Abschied von der zweiten Heimat', *Die Zeit*, 27 April 1990. Modrow only cursorily refers to the Warsaw Pact summit and his conversations with Gorbachev. The TASS report issued at the time was equally brief. It stated that talks had been held on 4 December between Gorbachev and Prime Minister

The purpose of the meeting, according to Modrow's later account, was to discuss the character of the democratic changes in East Germany and to coordinate Soviet-East German policies. Characterizing the meeting, Modrow stated that

> It became apparent that Gorbachev still harboured illusions. I did not dissuade him in this regard because I, at least in part, still believed in this idea as well: democratization as a process that would strengthen socialism in the GDR. Indeed I had the fear – but he had no idea – that [the process would lead] to a gradual disintegration of socialism in the GDR. Gorbachev [however] thought that now the path was free for perestroika in the GDR.[1386]

The fact that Gorbachev still harboured illusions was apparent also a few days later, in a meeting with Mitterrand in Kiev. The Soviet leader ruminated: '*The situation in the GDR is difficult. But it is not catastrophic. The people are working, and there are fewer demonstrations.'* Mitterrand asked him whether he thought that the East Germans were responding favourably to the idea of reunification. Gorbachev replied that there was such a response. 'However, you know, *more than half of the population of the GDR want to keep the present make-up of their country.'*[1387] In conformity with such convictions, Gorbachev had not drawn the conclusion from the resignation of the SED Politburo that the centre of gravity in the GDR had irrevocably shifted away from the SED to the coalition government, the opposition parties and the East German population. He still considered the SED (to be renamed PDS, or Party of Democratic Socialism at the party's upcoming extraordinary congress) to be the agent of change in East Germany.[1388] He also retained an ambiguous attitude to the ideas of *Vertragsgemeinschaft*, confederative structures and confederation, no matter whether in the Modrow or the Kohl versions. An interdepartmental paper, in the drafting of which Kvitsinsky was involved, included the suggestion

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Modrow, and that 'Chairman of the State Council of the GDR E. Krenz and Foreign Minister of the GDR O. Fischer' had attended the meeting; *Pravda*, 5 December 1989.

1386 Ibid.

1387 'Zapis' besedy M.S. Gorbacheva s prezidentom Frantsii F. Mitteranom, Kiev, 6 dekabria 1989 goda', p. 39 (italics mine).

1388 The TASS report provides an indication of this belief. The report states that Gorbachev gave assurances that the 'SED and our German friends can always count on our solidarity and support by the CPSU and the whole Soviet people' and that he wished 'the communists of the GDR success in the preparation of the [extraordinary] party congress.'

to the SED to refurbish its proposal, first made by Ulbricht in the 1950s, of a German confederation.[1389] A *limited nature* of intergovernmental cooperation was envisaged by its authors. Portugalov had hinted at such purposes earlier, when he had spoken of 'federative structures in areas such as the economy, ecology, culture, and many other things.'[1390] Similarly, in his meeting with Genscher, Gorbachev had attacked the idea of a common defense and security policy of a German confederation.[1391] Limited intergovernmental cooperation, however, was not what the West German government or the East German population wanted. Kvitsinsky, therefore, considered the interdepartmental paper to be dead on arrival even if it were to receive endorsement by the Soviet Politburo, formally still empowered to approve the draft.[1392]

The apparent or real abandonment of the nonchalant and noncommittal attitude towards the erosion of imperial control and influence in East Germany and Eastern Europe in December 1989 raises the question as to whether Gorbachev was now prepared to take tough practical measures and, if so, what options he still had available. One possible course of action was to play on the keyboard of Western European, and particularly British and French, concerns about the emergence of a strong Germany – a Fourth Reich – in the centre of Europe and, for that purpose, to revive Four Power control mechanisms.

European Concerns and the Four Power Card: Four Minus Two?

The opportunity to play the card of European apprehensions certainly existed. It presented itself not only because Kohl's Ten Point plan had been as much of a surprise to West Germany's European allies as to Gorbachev but also because it had been received by them with as much dismay. This was evident at the summit meeting of the European Community on 8 December in Strasbourg. 'In all the years that I had been chancellor', Kohl

1389 Concerning the origins of the interdepartmental paper, see *above*, fn. 1367.
1390 Interview with *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 17 November, FBIS-SOV-89-222, 20 November 1989, p. 34, quoted by Gedmin, *The Hidden Hand*, p. 114.
1391 This was mentioned above, pp. 548-49; 'Zapis' besedy s Genscherom', p. 34.
1392 Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, p. 17.

was to write in retrospect, 'I had never experienced an EC summit held in such an icy atmosphere.' He was taken aback about his partners' reactions – the 'interrogative questioning almost resembling that of a tribunal'.[1393]

The primary reason underlying the dismay lay in an apparent paradox. Western European leaders had reiterated their commitment to German reunification in the belief that this topic would forever remain theoretical, while privately adhering to the view that the division of Germany served European security interests. The latter sentiment, like the little boy's revelation about the emperor's new clothes in Andersen's fairy tale, had publicly been expressed in September 1984 by Giulio Andreotti, then Italy's foreign minister. In the context of blossoming intra-German contacts but frigid East-West relations and prompted by the cancellation of Honecker's visit to West Germany, he had stated: 'We all agree that there should be good relations between the two Germanys ... but one should not exaggerate things in this direction. ... Pan-Germanism has to be overcome. There are two German states, and two they shall remain.' He also joked 'I love Germany so much that I prefer to see two of them.'[1394] Unrepentant, he later added that he didn't understand the commotion caused by his remarks. He had not been the only Western leader who in the past twenty years had objected to German reunification. 'Who', he asked, 'has ever asserted that Ostpolitik means reunification?'[1395] Unlike in the fairy tale, however, the little boy of the twentieth-century real-life story incurred the wrath of the emperor and was severely taken to task; his parents profusely apologized and in the end the public reasserted that the emperor wore clothes after all.[1396] Yet despite the reassertion of reunification as an

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1393 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 195.

1394 'Genscher: Andreotti hat die Bundesrepublik gekränkt', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 September 1984.

1395 Ibid. Confirming Andreotti's allegation, former Austrian chancellor Bruno Kreisky commented: 'Mr Andreotti had the mishap to express somewhat more clearly what everyone is thinking.' For this quote and other European reactions see ''Dem Herrn Andreotti ist es halt passiert': Wer denkt was über den Wunsch der Deutschen nach Einheit?,' *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29 September 1984, and Eberhard Schulz and Peter Danylow, *Bewegung in der deutschen Frage? Die ausländischen Besorgnisse über die Entwicklung in den beiden deutschen Staaten*, 2nd ed., Research Paper No. 33, Research Institute of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, Bonn, April 1985, pp. 164-54.

1396 The Italian ambassador in Bonn was called to the West German foreign office for an explanation of Andreotti's statement. In a letter to chancellor Kohl, Italian

agreed-upon goal, European – in particular, French, Italian, and Dutch – apprehensions had not been assuaged. This was evident at the Strasbourg summit.

Thatcher was to take the lead in the 'interrogation'. The German chancellor thought that her negative attitude in Strasbourg, like that of many other leaders and among the public in Britain, was predicated, at the psychological and emotional level, upon 'deep distrust' vis-à-vis Germany and the Germans and, at the political level, based on categories prevalent before Churchill and on 'nineteenth-century 'balance of power' thinking'. Kohl also imputed to her the idea that Britain still played first fiddle in Europe.[1397] Genscher, not usually given to dramatization, in retrospect characterized Thatcher's demeanour at the meeting as 'blustering,' motivated, in his view, by the fact that the prime minister only 'hesitatingly adjusted to the inevitability of Germany unity'.[1398] But there was more to her attitude than mere adjustment problems. She was not only concerned about the speed with which German reunification was being put on the international agenda but about the very *principle*. In September, returning via Moscow from a visit to Japan, she had confided to Gorbachev that 'although NATO had traditionally made statements supporting Germany's aspiration to be reunited, in practice, we were rather apprehensive.'[1399] (This echoed a statement made by French political scientist Alfred Grosser to the effect that West Germany's Western allies were all in favor of reunification as long as they knew that it was not a realistic prospect.[1400]) The West, she had told Bush in November, should 'respect Gorbachev's wish to keep the Warsaw Pact frontiers'.[1401] She also questioned whether self-determination should be the central principle to govern the German prob-

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prime minister Benedetto Craxi disavowed his foreign minister; see *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 September 1984.

1397 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 196. Genscher similarly has stated that 'The British prime minister, it seemed, had political and emotional reservations'; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 691.

1398 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 690.

1399 Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 792.

1400 Cited in *Le Monde*, 'La question allemande: ouverte ou fermée?', 30 September 1984.

1401 Memcon of a telephone conversation between Bush and Thatcher, 17 November 1989 (note taker was Philip Zelikow), quoted in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 406.

lem. There were other important issues to consider, she said, including the role of the Four Powers in Berlin, the CSCE commitment to the inviolability of the European borders, continuation of change in Eastern Europe and the very fate of Gorbachev and perestroika.[1402] At the Strasbourg summit, however, the principle of self-determination was formally reasserted, and the summit, in consequence, was interpreted by Genscher as a 'great success'.[1403]

On the surface, Thatcher's attitude seemed to coincide with that of Mitterrand. The French president thought that 'If there was any hope now of stopping [sic] or slowing down reunification, it would only come from an Anglo-French initiative.'[1404] The latter's reservations, however, were much less fundamental than that of the former: the French president was thoroughly committed to his country's reconciliation with Germany and to European integration. The strong personal bonds that existed between Kohl and Mitterrand were also very much an expression of several decades of close French-German cooperation in the European Community on Coal and Steel and the European (Economic) Community and the two countries' mutual commitment to European integration. To that extent, as Kohl realized, Mitterrand shared the West German government's view that European integration and German unification should not be contradictory but *complementary* processes.[1405] Similarly, Genscher thought that 'Mitterrand, through the Europeanization of the German problem, wanted to prevent a repetition of the previous mistakes on both banks of the Rhine'. The German foreign minister also understood the importance which the French leader attached to an unequivocal codification of Poland's borders.[1406]

A first major test as to whether Gorbachev intended to play the anti-Hitler coalition card and, if so, whether he would be able to do so came in the meeting between him and Mitterrand on 6 December in Kiev. Certainly, as the transcript of the meeting underlines, there were similarities in

1402 In talks with Bush at Camp David, on 24 November 1989; Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p. 794, and the memcon of the meeting (note taker Brent Scowcroft), quoted in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 115-16.
1403 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 690.
1404 Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 796.
1405 Kohl, *Ich wollte die deutschen Einheit*, pp. 197-99.
1406 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 691-92.

perception between the two leaders. These pertained in particular to Kohl's initiative.[1407]

> F. MITTERRAND. ... Kohl's speech, his Ten Points, turned everything upside down. He confused all the factors. He is hurrying. I told Genscher that, and he didn't very much contradict my conclusions.
> M.S. GORBACHEV. This is very interesting! I also told him that. ... [He] is formulating his theses in such a form that they practically amount to a *diktat*.
> F. MITTERRAND. You said that explicitly? *Diktat* – that is a German word.
> M.S. GORBACHEV. I spoke even more sharply. And E.A. Shevardnadze [in reference to Kohl's demands for fundamental change in East Germany] said that even Hitler did not always speak in such a tone.

French and Soviet views also coincided on the relationship between German reunification and the processes of both Western and pan-European integration.

> F. MITTERRAND. ... It is necessary to make sure that the all-European process develops more rapidly than the German question and that it overtakes the German movement. We have to create all-European structures. The German component must only be one, and by no means the dominant or leading element of politics in Europe.

The similarities in interpretation extended to the importance of codifying the Polish borders as final and alleged ambiguities in the American attitude on this issue.

> F. MITTERRAND. ... I have to acknowledge that I remarked to my German friends and expressed my astonishment that when they put forward their considerations they failed to mention the frontiers of Poland. This is a serious problem. All the countries of the European community approach this the same way even though the sharpness with which they express this may vary.
> M.S. GORBACHEV. I have the feeling that the United States are not quite open about their position, they don't explain it fully.
> F. MITTERRAND. This is true. ...

What about the practical consequences of this congruence? Did Gorbachev intend to turn the similarity of views and French concerns into a diplomatic instrument against reunification? Mitterrand put that very question to Gorbachev. 'What, concretely, are you planning to do?,' he asked. 'Above all, to continue the line of peaceful changes,' Gorbachev replied. 'May each country decide its directions for itself.' Perhaps taken

1407 All subsequent citations from the meeting according to 'Zapis' besedy M.S. Gorbacheva s prezidentom Frantsii F. Mitteranom. Kiev, 6 dekabria 1989 goda'.

aback himself by the lack of concreteness, the Soviet leader added: 'You are right, one should not simply observe, one has to act.' However, according to the Soviet transcript, the suggested action extended to nothing more than generalities such as 'building trust' and 'broadening cooperation'.

The inkling of some joint initiative, strange as it was, came in the context of Mitterrand's plans to visit the GDR, still agreed upon with Honecker and scheduled for 20 December. He wondered about the political significance of such a visit and whether could be considered a declaration of no-confidence in the Modrow government. Gorbachev interjected that perhaps he, too, should visit the GDR! The French president then suggested: 'Well, then, let's go together.' Nothing, however, came of this suggestion.

To generalize from the meeting with Mitterrand, the two leaders shared interpretations, sentiments, and concerns, and agreed that *something* should be done. But they had no plan of action and, at least as far as bilateral relations were concerned, no intention to develop a plan. It was in all likelihood in consequence of the mutually perceived need to do something and be seen as doing something that, on 8 December, Gorbachev reverted to the Four Power proposal.

The idea to convene a Four Power meeting at the ambassadorial level to discuss the German problem had apparently been developed in the Soviet embassy in East Berlin. In a telegram to Moscow, Kochemasov had emphasized that the very convocation of such a meeting would serve to emphasize the continued responsibility of the Four Powers for the German problem and that it would be advisable to hold meetings on a regular basis, that is, to institutionalize the process. Presumably conscious of the likely Western, certainly American, objections to a reactivation of the Four Power mechanism on Germany, the embassy suggested using an initiative advanced by the Western allies of December 1987 on Berlin as a frame of reference.[1408] The initiative had envisaged an expansion of contacts and exchanges between East and West Berlin and authorization for Lufthansa to institute a regular service to Berlin but Moscow had rejected the idea with the argument that Four Power discussions could only pertain to *West* Berlin and that matters of civil aviation could not be discussed in that framework because they touched upon the sovereignty of the GDR.[1409]

1408 Kotschemassow, *Meine letzte Mission*, p. 196.

1409 Soviet and East German decision-making processes and the rationales for the objections in Moscow and East Berlin to the Western initiative, including talks

Now, however, not only Berlin as a whole but the German problem, according to Soviet intentions, was to be the subject matter of discussion.

The Four Power meeting took place on 11 December in the building of the Allied Control Council in the American sector of Berlin.[1410] If symbolism was the intended effect of the meeting, no better venue could have been chosen. The ACC, defunct since Marshal Sokolovsky had left it in protest in March 1948 at the onset of the Berlin crisis, had been the collective repository of inter-allied sovereignty *in* and instrument of control *over* defeated Germany. Now, after the passage of more than four decades, the widely disseminated picture of the four ambassadors – Vernon Walters, Vyacheslav Kochemasov, Christopher Mallaby and Serge Boidevaix – in front of the Control Council headquarters building was bound to create the impression that the wartime coalition was determined to reassert its interests in Germany and give corresponding notice to Bonn. To that extent, it superbly served the purpose of a warning shot and proof of inter-allied activity. If, however, the meeting was designed by the Soviet leadership as a serious effort to prevent or delay German unification, or to re-establish the anti-Hitler coalition framework for managing the German problem, it turned out to be a resounding failure. Although the British and French had readily agreed to the meeting, and the Americans reluctantly, all three powers had insisted on an agenda limited to *Berlin*. Kochemasov did not respect that limitation, repeating the then current Gorbachevian litany about the GDR as a strategic ally of the Soviet Union and member of the Warsaw Pact and criticizing certain persons or circles who would like to interfere in the internal affairs of the GDR. The three Western ambassadors, however, opposed the broadening of the agenda and objected to the Soviet proposal for an institutionalization of the inter-allied process. The meeting also evoked strong reactions in Bonn. At the NATO foreign

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between Bondarenko and SED Politburo member Krolikowski and Honecker's consent to the Soviet reply, can be found in SED Politburo, *Arbeitsprotokolle*, Central Party Archives, J IV 2/2/2A/3146.

1410 Mitterrand, at the Strasbourg summit, had reported as a matter of fact that the Soviet Union had asked to convene a meeting of the four guarantors of the 1971 Berlin Agreement, adding that France, as a matter of course, would accede to the request; Teltschik, 329 Tage, p. 72; Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 201. It is unclear from Kochemasov's account where the suggestion came from to choose the ACC building as the venue for the meeting. The Soviet ambassador had suggested holding the meeting 'in the FRG'; Kotschemassow, *Meine letzte Mission*, p. 196.

ministers' conference on 13 December in Brussels, Genscher wanted to achieve 'absolute clarity' on that matter and bluntly warned: 'You have to decide between cooperation with us in NATO and the European Community or with the Soviet Union in the Control Council.'[1411] If, to reiterate, the Soviet leadership had regarded the Four minus Two venue as an appropriate forum for asserting its interests, it failed in that purpose.

To summarize, utilization of Western European concerns and Four Power machinery to arrest or delay German unification was never a viable Soviet option. Gorbachev realized that little could be gained by attempts to turn the anti-Hitler coalition into an anti-Kohl coalition. Moscow continued to make such attempts even after the 11 December meeting in Berlin but they lacked conviction and determination. There were several mutually reinforcing reasons for Gorbachev to refrain from playing the inter-allied card. (1) The *Western powers* were not prepared to join the Soviet Union in such an attempt. For several decades, as mentioned, they had formally committed themselves to the principle of German unification to be achieved through self-determination, which in turn was to be exercised through free elections. For these powers now to admit openly that their support of these principles had been a charade would seriously have eroded the credibility of Western diplomacy. (2) Even the *Soviet Union* was committed − on paper at least − to self-determination through the assertion of the principle of the Freedom of Choice and, more specifically, the June 1989 Joint Declaration. Furthermore, on a practical level, the anti-Hitler coalition option carried serious risks. West Germany's power and influence in Europe had steadily increased; the United States regarded that country as its most important ally in Europe and solidly supported Bonn's position; France was inextricably linked to West Germany in the European Community and unwilling to jeopardize progress on European integration; and Britain on its own was too weak to be an effective Soviet ally. (3) None of the Western leaders, ideologically least of all Thatcher, but also Mitterrand, as his performance in Kiev showed, had any serious interest in stabilizing a reform socialist *East Germany* of dubious legitimacy, nor did they have the means to do so. In addition, the Four minus Two framework meant exclusion not only of West Germany but also of East Germany from the negotiation process – a step that would have counteracted any policy aimed at upgrading the international stature and internal legitimacy

1411 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 696.

of the GDR. (4) The stabilization of the *reform process* in the Soviet Union had top priority for the Soviet leadership and for that purpose a cooperative rather than an ostracized West Germany was an important precondition. For the Soviet Union to join Bonn's partners in an attempt to stop German unification, as Chernyaev has written, would have meant that 'the cold war would have broken out again' and that this was something the Western European 'alliance partners [themselves] did not want'.[1412] Soviet policies on Germany, therefore, continued to be constrained by severe internal and international circumstances, by lack of vision and by bureaucratic confusion. This applies also to Gorbachev's acceptance of German unification.

6. Gorbachev's Acceptance of German Unification

One of the central analytical tasks in the reconstruction of the collapse of Soviet empire could be the attempt to pinpoint the precise date when the Soviet leadership consented to German unification and decided on the basic outlines of united Germany's international status. Ideally, one would be able to identify one or more Politburo meetings where the internal and external aspects of German unification were put on the agenda, discussed and then implemented. In practice, however, both the internal and external aspects were never formally linked, discussed and decided. A formal meeting of the Politburo to consent to German unification or to decide the Soviet position on Germany's international status was never held. A meeting that took place at the end of January 1990 and that involved a selected circle of decision-makers, including several Politburo members, by then simply took German unification for granted. Its participants decided a few procedural questions for negotiations with West German and East German leaders but failed to address, let alone resolve, the principles of the Soviet negotiation position on the external aspects of German unification. A formal Politburo meeting on the German problem was convened at the begin-

1412 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 310. He expressed this opinion in reference to the Malta summit and Bush's comment to Gorbachev that 'Kohl knows that some Western alliance partners verbally support reunification, which the German people want, but are concerned about this perspective', and that it was 'strange that the Soviet Union was sitting in the same boat with our European NATO allies.'

ning of May 1990 but it continued to treat the internal and international problems of the German problem as separate, and the majority of its participants, including Gorbachev, were adamantly opposed to united Germany's membership in NATO. This apparently firm position was reversed less than four weeks later by Gorbachev, single-handedly, at the Soviet-American summit in Washington – to the surprise of the American and the consternation of the Soviet participants, without prior consultation of other Politburo members and top decision-makers, and contrary to the advice of all the senior experts on Germany.

How is it possible to explain this extraordinary state of affairs? Part of the answer has been provided in the previous chapter, which dealt with the relegation of the traditional mainstays of the imperial system to a secondary role; the shift in decision-making authority to a small circle of top leaders and their advisers and personal assistants; the exacerbation of conflict between the broad base of conservative bureaucracies and the thin layer of advocates of the New Thinking at the top; and increased pressure for more radical reform exerted by the newly created legislative bodies and the politically aware segments of public opinion. Another explanation lies in the interaction of the disintegration of the traditional decision-making institutions and machinery and the disintegration of empire.

In detail, the Soviet consent to German unification began with bureaucratic confusion. One of its noteworthy examples was the speech Shevardnadze delivered on 19 December to the Political Commission of the European Parliament. Not unlike the main report by the general secretary to party congresses, including Gorbachev's address to the Twenty-seventh Congress in February-March 1986, the foreign minister's speech constituted a compromise between different positions of various institutions. In the present case, in addition to embodying the vested interests of the foreign ministry and the Central Committee's International Department, it represented a split between the top and the middle echelons *within* the foreign ministry. Shevardnadze, conscious of the inexorable drift towards German unity on the one hand, and the stale and ineffective Soviet approach to the German problem on the other, had wanted to set new directions in his speech in Brussels. That objective, in essence, failed to be achieved be-

cause of blatant inconsistencies and contractions, and the unhealthy mixture of the old and the new that characterized the speech. [1413]

The problem had begun with a draft submitted by Bondarenko and the Third European Department that reflected both the traditional Soviet position on Germany as well as the hard line Gorbachev had adopted vis-à-vis Genscher on 6 December and at the 9 December Central Committee meeting. The draft contradicted Shevardnadze's purposes of flexibility. In consequence, he asked Tarasenko (as noted, one of his chief personal aides but not an expert on Germany) to rewrite it and to focus on the conditions that the Soviet Union should attach to German unity if and when it occurred. The revised draft was returned to the Third Department and produced a severe conflict between Tarasenko and Bondarenko, the latter demanding that the line authoritatively laid down by Gorbachev be adhered to and that the draft be kept intact. Upon Shevardnadze's insistence, the revisions remained in the draft document. However, it would seem that the foreign minister himself was by no means as unequivocally committed to an entirely new approach as his aide has made it appear in retrospect: the foreign minister had the draft submitted to ambassador Kvitsinsky in Bonn, who bent it away from the implicit acceptance of unification and hardened the conditions to be attached to it. Shevardnadze received Kvitsinsky's revised revisions after he had arrived in Brussels and, Tarasenko's protest notwithstanding, accepted them for the final version.

Shevardnadze sought *ex post facto* to impute clarity of purpose to the speech. 'In Brussels', he wrote in his memoirs, 'I carefully outlined our position.'[1414] However, given the conflicting inputs, the speech contained major contradictions. One of the most glaring concerned the fact that Shevardnadze dealt with the possible implications of German unification but, at the same time, stated that the Soviet position had been expressed by 'Gorbachev at the CPSU Central Committee plenary meeting' to the effect that the GDR was the Soviet Union's 'strategic ally and a member of the Warsaw Pact'; that one had to take these 'realities' into account; and that any departure from the existence of two separate German states would

1413 The following account of the background of the speech is based on this author's interviews with Tarasenko and Kvitsinsky; see also, based on the same sources, Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 149-50.

1414 Shevardnadze, *Moi vybor*, p. 230.

threaten 'destabilization in Europe'.[1415] The Helsinki process of pan-European cooperation should not 'be ruined on German soil', he warned. That was 'impermissible.' He also reminded his listeners that the Four Powers had legal rights in Germany and 'have at their disposal a considerable contingent of armed forces equipped with nuclear weapons on the territory of the GDR and the FRG'.

The central part of Shevardnadze's speech was a barrage of questions, formally separated as a bloc of seven, with several sub-questions. 'Where are the legal and material guarantees', he asked, that German unity would 'not create a threat to the national security of other states and to peace in Europe?' Would Germany recognize the existing borders in Europe? What place would it take in the military-political structures existing on the continent? What would be its military doctrine and the structure of its armed forces? Would it be prepared to take steps toward demilitarization and adopt a neutral status? What would be its attitude toward the presence of allied troops and the continued operation of military liaison missions of the Four Powers? What would be the status of the Quadripartite Agreement of 1971 on Berlin? How would German unification tie in with the Helsinki process? Would a united Germany radically restructure its economic and other links with Eastern Europe? Would the two German states, if they expressed themselves in favour of starting to move toward the unity of the Germans, consider the interests of other European states and be ready to conclude a European peace settlement? 'The peoples of the Soviet Union', Shevardnadze concluded, 'have a right to know what changes in Central Europe [sic] might mean for their future and their security. We paid for today's European stability with the lives of 20 million people.'[1416]

The hybrid nature of Shevardnadze's speech was evident not only in its contradictory substance but also in the fact that some of the questions appeared in the future tense ('will Germany ...?'), others were expressed in the future conditional ('would Germany ...?'), thus leaving the audience to wonder whether its author(s) proceeded from German unity as inevitable or hypothetical. Nowhere, however, was German reunification mentioned as a potentially positive contribution to European security. Several of the questions were almost indistinguishable from conditions. They failed to add up to a consistent Soviet position or international framework within

1415 'Evropa – vremia peremen. Vystuplenie E.A. Shevardnadze v politicheskoi komissii Evropeiskogo parlamenta', *Pravda*, 20 December 1989.

1416 Ibid.

which German reunification could be achieved. Shevardnadze's preferences as to how individual questions should be answered also remained vague. Since a united Germany was apparently considered undesirable, the continued existence of two German states could be interpreted as being his main preference. If German unity were to come nevertheless, his preference then appeared to be a demilitarized, neutral country. NATO membership seemed to be definitely out of the question: one could 'not seriously think that the status of the GDR will change radically while the status of the FRG will remain as it was', Shevardnadze said. This, however, was precisely what was to happen. In fact, as the Soviet foreign minister was speaking, the internal conditions in the GDR *were* changing radically and eroding even further Moscow's remaining influence in that country.[1417]

Acceleration of the Demise of the GDR

The primary instrument of Soviet control in East Germany had been the East German communist party. That control, as reconstructed here in detail, had substantially weakened as a result of policy differences between the CPSU and the SED and, at the personal level, between Honecker and Gorbachev. After the involuntary resignation of both Honecker and Krenz, one of the issues that would determine the fate of the residual Soviet influence in East Germany was the degree to which the SED would be successful in transforming itself into a viable reform socialist party. An attempt to achieve such metamorphosis was made at the party's extraordinary congress that began on 8 December and lasted, with one week of intermission, until 17 December. The party changed its name to Socialist Unity Party–Party of Democratic Socialism (SED–PDS, later only PDS); elected as party chief Gregor Gysi, a flamboyant defense lawyer, who had made a name for himself in political trials; gave prominence to reform communist leaders such as Wolfgang Berghofer, the mayor of Dresden, and prime minister Modrow; and promised to pursue a new path between Western-style capitalism and command-bureaucratic socialism, that is, the road of demo-

1417 Shevardnadze talked to Genscher after he had delivered the speech. The conversation appears to have been uneventful and uninspiring. The West German foreign minister formed the impression that Moscow would accept the course of events, provided they proceeded in an orderly fashion; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 703.

cratic socialism. The effort, however, was in vain. Several factors contributed to this failure.

First, revolutions, as perceptive observes have noted, often follow a cycle. The *ancien régime's* repression provides cause for grievances and gives rise to demands for reform; a new leadership takes heed of the demands and embarks upon a reformist course, which in turn is interpreted as weakness, fuelling a revolution; radicalization sets in, and the cycle ends in a return to reform or in reaction.[1418] In late 1989 and the first half of 1990, East Germany, neighbouring Czechoslovakia and Poland, as indeed the Soviet Union itself, were in the middle of a phase of *radicalization*. In such a phase, the discredited mainstays of the old regime, including its reformist vanguard, usually have little chance to recapture the trust and goodwill of the population.

Second, the SED lacked a reform socialist tradition. Its possible emergence had been suppressed first by Ulbricht after the forced merger of the KPD and SPD in April 1946 and then by Honecker, most recently in his 'two-front' struggle against Gorbachev-style *demokratizatsiia* and West German social democracy with *soziale Marktwirtschaft*. Conceivably, there was a reform socialist base among the rank and file members. That possible base, however, was rapidly melting away. In the three months preceding the congress, the party lost over half a million of its 2.3 million members – a process that showed no sign of being arrested, let alone reversed, as 1989 drew to a close. The majority of those who were leaving the party, one would suspect, were turning their back not only on past neo-Stalinism but also on possible future reform socialism in the GDR.[1419]

Third, the SED-PDS's association with the Soviet Union and the CPSU was a serious liability. The disadvantages of the link had by no means been removed by Gorbachev's reform attempts, which in both Soviet and East German perceptions had yet to produce tangible economic benefits. To the extent that the enthusiastic welcome that the Soviet party leader had received in East Berlin two months earlier could have been interpreted as a popular endorsement for the introduction of reform socialism in the

1418 See, for instance, Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'ancien régime et la révolution* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), and Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965).

1419 For the statistical data and their interpretation see David Binder, 'At Confessional East Berlin Congress, an "Absolute Break" with Stalinism', *New York Times*, 18 December 1989.

GDR, rather than a tribute to Gorbachev's courage and personality and a demonstration of no confidence in Honecker, the popular mood had substantially changed after the opening of the wall. Due in part to the realization, both in East Berlin and in Moscow, of the possible problems that could be caused by an emphasis on close party links, the CPSU delegation attending the congress was small and kept a low profile. Previously, the CPSU's General Secretary would have attended such a congress. At the SED-PDS's extraordinary congress, however, the Soviet delegation was led by Yakovlev and included Ambassador Kochemasov and CC International Department officials Falin, Portugalov and Valentin Kopteltsev. It did not include Gorbachev: his personal assistants and ID officials thought that his participation could have been interpreted as old-style interference in internal party affairs and would have committed the prestige of the Soviet Union to a political process and a leadership struggle whose outcome was indeterminate.[1420] The role of the delegation, too, was minimal. In the view of Markus Wolf, one of the officers of the congress, that role consisted for the most part of the 'delegation conveying to the party chairman and his deputies the official greetings of the Central Committee of the CPSU'.[1421]

Fourth, the establishment of trust between the new party and the population was hampered by the stream of revelations about party corruption and the activities of the state security ministry.[1422] Most East Germans had apparently adhered to the notion that the GDR party elite had been inured against the temptations of the perks and privileges enjoyed by the 'new class' in other communist countries. Such comforting notions about austere lifestyles of the elite, however, were shattered starting in early December after the submission to the *Volkskammer* of a parliamentary committee report that had investigated the party's abuse of power. Other investigations also revealed the shadowy business activities of Schalck-Golodkowski's committee for Commercial Coordination (*Kommerzielle Koordinierung*, or *KoKo*) under the auspices of the GDR's foreign trade ministry. Its primary purpose was the procurement of hard currency but in the process it engaged in shady business deals, including weapons exports and the sell-off of treasures from East German art and natural history muse-

1420 Interview with Zagladin.

1421 Wolf, *In eigenem Auftrag*, p. 313.

1422 The description of party corruption and Stasi activities follows Pond, *Beyond the Wall*, pp. 140-44.

ums. The damaging revelations extended to the involvement of the Stasi in sheltering West German terrorists, as well as training and financing terrorist activities abroad. The vast network of Stasi informers also began to be uncovered. At the same time, evidence came to light about systematic attempts made by state security personnel to destroy files, tapes and videos that presumably contained incriminating evidence about Stasi activities, full-time agents and collaborators. In response, also at the beginning of December, irate citizens began to occupy Stasi offices in order to prevent the burning and shredding of records.

Fifth, the repository of radicalization was irrevocably shifting from an amorphous Roundtable of social and political forces to an even more amorphous but ultimately more powerful population at large. Typically for the vagaries of revolution, a wide rift was opening between two major agents of radicalization. The Roundtable, which in addition to the purportedly 'new' communist party and its vacillating allies of the 'democratic bloc' included a colourful spectrum of social and political opposition groups – the Protestant and Catholic churches, human rights activists, peace advocates, feminists and ecologists – stood firmly on the ground of building a *separate* socialist East Germany; some of its members even expressed regret that the wall had come down because it hindered such a development.[1423] The majority of the population, in contrast, was increasingly embracing the goal of *unification* which, in essence, meant the transfer of the West German political, economic and social system to East Germany.

1423 For instance, Friedrich Schorlemmer, one of the opposition leaders, had expressed the following view: 'The coexistence of two political and social systems will create great problems. Therefore *I would prefer that the wall, where there are no holes, remains a while longer*' (italics mine); quoted in Daniel Hamilton, *After the Revolution: The New Political Landscape in East Germany*, German Issues, No. 7 (Washington: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 1990), p. 12. – Schorlemmer remained true to such anti-'establishment' and anti-mainstream convictions. In 2014, German president Joachim Gauck, as well as other German government officials, on several occasions made the point that military power in international affairs retained utility and that international conditions existed where there was no choice other than the use of force. In response, Schorlemmer called the president a 'disgusting warmonger' (*widerlicher Kriegshetzer*): 'Friedrich Schorlemmer: Friedrich Schorlemmer: Gauck sollte schweigen', *Neues-deutschland.de*, 27 June 2014, http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/937316.schorlemmer-gauck-sollte-schweigen.html.

In their attempt to construct a socialist utopia, it was not only the SED-PDS but also the more radical opposition democrats temporarily allied with it in the Roundtable that faced severe handicaps in their attempt to shape the destiny of a separate East Germany. The latter's main problems consisted in internal dissension, political ineffectiveness and lack of administrative experience. Their common denominator had been opposition to the Honecker regime but their social and professional backgrounds as well as their political and philosophical persuasion were extremely diverse.[1424] The artists, writers, bards, pastors and scientists that made up the opposition groups were, for the most part, only loosely organized. They subscribed to a wide range of ideas, including those expressed by Mahatma Gandhi about civil disobedience; Catholic Latin American liberation theologists; Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer of the Protestant anti-Nazi Confessing Church; American civil rights activists; the West German Greens; and the remnants of the once powerful 'peace movement'. Some of the groups shared a strong sense of 'anti-politics', with an emphasis on *Kultur* and society rather than on the acquisition and management of power. Furthermore, in contrast to Poland and Czechoslovakia, with their Lech Wałęsas and Václav Havels, East Germany lacked a prominent anti-establishment figure who could have united the various currents of the opposition movement and given them purpose and direction. The Roundtable, then, acting in many ways as a second parliament, was bound to be yet one of those transitional institutions that tend to spring up in times of revolutionary upheaval but disappear as it progresses. Its most important achievement, perhaps, was the agreement to hold free elections in May 1990, later advanced to 18 March.

Given the inability of the SED-PDS to win the trust of the population and the ineffectiveness of the democratic opposition, the West German government and West German political parties became the most important driving force in East German internal affairs. A Hegelian approach or, in its material version, a Marxist view may help in understanding the ensuing process. Its objective nature – deteriorating East German political and economic conditions – was supplemented by a dialectic relationship between two subjective factors: the West German government's determination to maintain the momentum towards *unification* and its interest in a *stabilization* of conditions in East Germany. This necessitated reconciliation of

1424 See Hamilton, *The New Political Landscape*, pp. 8-9.

seemingly contradictory purposes. (1) While unification implied abolition of the GDR, stabilization necessitated some degree of assistance; but that assistance should not serve to preserve what was, after all, still a communist regime without popular legitimacy. (2) The commitment to reunification had to be credible, but it should not precipitate a collapse of law, order, and administrative structures in the GDR.[1425]

One of the main reasons for the West German government's interest in a modicum of stabilization lay in the unabated outflow of East Germans. In mid-December 1989, the Federal German government reported that, in the period from 1 January to 13 December 1989, a total of 324,776 East Germans had registered to resettle in West Germany.[1426] In November, 133,429 *Übersiedler* had registered. In the period between 1 and 13 December, 24,143 East Germans had done so, that is, East Germans were still leaving the GDR at the rate of 2,000 a day – a rate that was maintained in January 1990.[1427] This state of affairs caused problems for both the Kohl and the Modrow government. As for East Germany, given essentially the same composition of the emigrants in 1989 as in 1953 and 1961, the disruptive effects on the economy were considerable. But West Germany was negatively affected, too, since it was saddled not only with the administrative cost and effort of attempting to integrate the large influx of Germans from the GDR but also of the German *Aussiedler* from Eastern and Southeastern Europe (foremost from Romania) and the Soviet Union (the Volga Germans), expected to reach about 350,000 by the end of the year. As the chief West German manager of the difficult technicalities of unification has stated, Bonn was concerned that 'the national problem could turn into

1425 The West German government's perceptions of conflicting policy preferences became evident in the government's preparations for Chancellor Kohl's visit to Dresden; see Wolfgang Schäuble, *Der Vertrag: Wie ich über die deutsche Einheit verhandelte*, with an introduction by Dirk Koch and Klaus Wirtgen (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1991), pp. 21-22.

1426 Figures of the Federal Republic's ministry of the interior, as quoted in *New York Times*, 16 De-cember 1989.

1427 Shortly before the building of the Berlin wall, East Germans were leaving the GDR at the rate of about 3,000 a day; for details about the earlier emigrations trends, see *above*, p. 132. Terminologically, the German government made a difference between *Übersiedler*, that is, Germans living in the GDR who relocated from there to West Germany, and *Aussiedler*, members of the German minority who have lived abroad for generations, e.g. in Eastern, East-Central and South-Eastern Europe, and were now moving to West Germany.

a social problem'.[1428] There was, of course, a theoretical possibility of stopping the flow: the government could introduce a law on a separate West German citizenship in the Bundestag. From a practical perspective, however, this avenue toward the solution of the refugee problem was blocked. It could have been argued that such a step would be a violation of the constitution and that, to provide clarification and legitimacy to such a measure, a decision of the constitutional court would be required or a two-thirds majority in parliament to change the Basic Law. Whatever the legal implications of the government's intentions, the political controversies that would have been produced by the introduction of a new citizenship law would have been enormous and even raising the issue would in all likelihood have transformed the flow of East Germans into a torrent.

The shift of political dynamics and the popular mood in East Germany away from GDR party and government institutions to the West German model was amply demonstrated by Genscher's and Kohl's visits to East Germany. On 16-17 December, the West German foreign minister had visited several East German cities, including his native Halle. His primary contacts there were with representatives of the democratic opposition, in particular with leaders of the Protestant Church, and with leaders of the liberal democratic bloc party, the LDPD, thereby heralding both the drift of the 'democratic bloc' parties away from communist tutelage and the beginning of attempts by the more powerful parties in West Germany to build up corresponding party structures in the east. The most memorable event was Genscher's address in the city of Halle's Market Church, which he had attended with his parents until he left the GDR in 1952. Politically the most important feature was the warm and at times exuberant reception he received in the East German cities and towns he visited.[1429] Kohl's visit to Dresden on 19 December confirmed the pattern of close interaction between West German government representatives and the East German population. Like his foreign minister, the chancellor was enthusiastically greeted by tens of thousands of East Germans, who waved black-red-and-gold flags without the communist regime's hammer-and-sickle emblem. The green-and-white flag of the former state of Saxony was also in evidence, a harbinger of yet another development to come: the abolition of

1428 Schäuble, *Der Vertrag*, p. 22.
1429 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 697-702.

the GDR's administrative districts, modelled along Soviet oblasts, and the reconstitution of the *Länder* structure in East Germany.[1430]

The degree to which East Germany, at any time in the past, had been dependent on West Germany is still debatable. For the most part, there had been a gap between Soviet perceptions and reality, with the imperial centre exaggerating that dependence. There can be little doubt, however, that the perceptual gap had closed by the end of 1989.[1431] This was dramatically underlined by Kohl's talks with Modrow on 19 December in Dresden. The almost complete exchange of the GDR's dependence on the Soviet Union for that on West Germany was palpable in Modrow's demeanour. As described by Teltschik, the East German prime minister opened the talks between the two delegations, reading at a hectic pace from a typewritten text, his 'face pale and contorted, his fuzzy hair in a mess. He avoids eye contact, hardly shows any emotion ... and doesn't smile.' He was visibly concerned about the accelerated drift towards German unification and domestic instability in the GDR and complained about West German interference in East German internal affairs.[1432] The central East German demand in the negotiations was the request for West German financial assistance in the amount of DM 15 billion for the year 1990. Modrow justified this demand not only by pointing to the acute problems caused by the opening of the borders, the *de facto* introduction of the West German mark as a second currency in the GDR and the need to finance the modernization of East German industry and agriculture. He also regarded it as just compensation for the reparations that the GDR had paid to the Soviet Union on behalf of all of Germany.[1433] Kohl rejected the – in his view –

1430 Modrow, in retrospect, has acknowledged that there was only 'a small number of people who courageously demanded a continuation of the process of democratization and of the existence of the GDR' but that a 'large majority wanted the unification of the two German states'; Modrow, *Aufbruch und Ende*, p. 100.

1431 For details about the deteriorating economic conditions in the GDR and the degree of East Germany's dependency on West Germany, see *above*, pp. 203-9, 286-87 and 518-19.

1432 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 88; similarly Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 215.

1433 According to internationally recognized estimates, Modrow wrote in his memoirs, the GDR had paid reparations in the amount of DM 99.1 billion, the Federal Republic only DM 21 billion. Furthermore, West Germany had benefitted from the Marshall Plan; Modrow, *Aufbruch und Ende*, p. 98. Modrow as well as Kohl and Teltschik also report the West German chancellor's objection to the use of the term *Lastenausgleich*, or burden sharing. The term was used in West

unacceptably high sum of the aid request with the argument that a framework (*Rahmenbedingungen*) for the extension of large-scale assistance had to be created first. He did, however, agree to the creation of a joint hard currency fund in the amount of DM 2 billion for the purpose of facilitating travel between the two parts of Germany; to increase the credit line under the European Recovery Program by DM 2 billion; to raise the credit ceiling for East German exports to West Germany from DM 1.5 to 6 billion; and to elevate the amount of compensation for postal charges in intra-German exchanges from DM 100 to 300 million. Following the established practice of such generosity, political conditions had to be met by the GDR. These included further commitments by the Modrow government to liberal and market-oriented reforms; a change in the exchange rate of the East German and the West German mark to reflect more closely their market value; in preparation of the *Vertragsgemeinschaft,* the creation of a plethora of joint commissions with the purpose of synchronizing and harmonizing communications, environmental, legal and law enforcement activities; and finally, as a symbolic gesture, the opening of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin as an exit and entry point for pedestrians.[1434]

Kohl's visit to Dresden and his talks with Modrow created yet another of the many paradoxes described here. The wide-spread popular support for German unity and the weakness of the Modrow government amounted to a revelation for the West German chancellor that significantly influenced his thinking.[1435] It reinforced his disinclination to support a government in East Berlin that had not been legitimized by free elections and persuaded him to push more vigorously and directly for German unification than before. The joint declaration signed in Dresden on the establish-

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Germany for compensating claimants in that part of the country who had suffered economic losses in the Second World War, including those who had lost properties in the east. The term implied a moral obligation to pay damages. Kohl rejected such an implication and suggested instead the term *Solidarbeitrag*, or solidarity contribution.

1434 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 215-16; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 89-90; and press reports; for the text of the joint declaration on the talks between Kohl and Modrow, see 'Gemeinsame Mitteilung über die Gespräche des Bundeskanzlers mit dem Ministerpräsidenten der DDR in Dresden', Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, *Bulletin*, No. 148, 20 December 1989, pp. 1249-52.

1435 In his memoirs, Kohl called it a *Schlüsselerlebnis*, or key experience, on the road to national unity; Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 213.

ment of a *Vertragsgemeinschaft* and good-neighbourly relations between the two states as part of a 'new European architecture' was already obsolete when it was signed.[1436] Modrow later was to complain bitterly but accurately that Kohl reneged on almost all of the financial commitments; that 'as early as January [the chancellor] no longer had any interest in negotiations about a *Vertragsgemeinschaft*'; that for him 'I soon became no longer a responsible partner for talks'; and that, based on the enthusiastic popular reception he had experienced in Dresden, he abandoned the policy of gradualism and decided on 'unification in quick step'.[1437] Kohl, however, still envisaged a five-year time frame in which unification could be achieved *if* the Soviet Union consented to it. He was still conscious of the fact that the 'key to German unity' lay in the Kremlin.[1438] That key was to be handed to him in February 1990. The reasons for this fundamental change in Soviet policy lay not only in the loss of control over events in the GDR but in the close interaction of the accelerating collapse of the centre's empire in Eastern Europe – the external empire – with the increasing likelihood of a disintegration of the *internal* empire, that is, of the Soviet Union itself. That interaction occurred in conditions of a radicalization of Soviet domestic politics.

Yielding the Key to German Unity

The radicalization of Soviet domestic politics in the winter of 1989 and 1990 – a winter of discontent – occurred at four different levels: the top political leadership; the USSR Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet; the communist party; and public opinion in Moscow, Leningrad and other big cities. The move towards more radical reform included economic components but its primary rationale was *political*. As a result, the gap between political liberalization and economic restructuring

1436 'Gemeinsame Mitteilung', p. 1249.

1437 Modrow, *Aufbruch und Ende*, pp. 99-100.

1438 Interview with Teltschik. On 21 December Mitterrand visited East Berlin. The French president's ambiguity about the purpose of the visit was described above, in the context of his talks with Gorbachev on 6 December, pp. 558-60. The unfolding events had made the visit even more problematic. Since there was neither a French attempt nor indeed the possibility for France to stabilize the Modrow government and delay German unification, there is no point here to dwell on the visit.

became wider and domestic political conflicts more acute. These conflicts were exacerbated by nationality conflicts and independence movements in the Baltic republics and Azerbaijan.

The form which the new dynamics took centred on the question as to whether the Soviet Union should and, indeed, could achieve a transition from a totalitarian one-party state to a pluralist democracy; from a system dominated by a leader appointed by a party holding the monopoly of power to one with a popularly elected president; from a unitary, centralized state to a genuine federation with power allocated to the union republics; from a command economy and state ownership to private property and the market; from arbitrary rule of the party to a system based on the rule of law; from the privileged role of the military in the political system and resource allocation favouring the military-industrial complex to civilian control of the armed forces and defense conversion; and from *Gleichschaltung* to an active civil society. The process, as described earlier, had been set in motion by Gorbachev's campaign for glasnost after the Chernobyl disaster in April 1986. It continued at the January 1987 Central Committee plenum and the June 1988 Party conference, with their emphasis on democratization, in October 1988 with the emasculation of the central party apparatus and in the March 1989 elections to the First Congress of People's Deputies. The course of action to be decided by Gorbachev and his advisors in 1990 was whether he should (1) take the lead in this historic change and replace his power and authority derived from the communist party by popular legitimacy, expunge article 6 from the Soviet constitution that enshrined the CPSU's monopoly of power, force a split of the party, lead a new radical reform-socialist or social-democratic movement and, with its backing, contest free elections for the presidency, (2) stand aloof from party politics and popular elections and shift the centre of gravity to an executive presidency elected by the Congress of People's Deputies or (3) retain his office of General Secretary of the CPSU and continue to work for reform within the party and, through it, in the country.

'What on earth should I do?', Gorbachev asked Yakovlev in exasperation on 26 January. '[Turmoil in] Azerbaijan and Lithuania, [in Russia, right-wing] radicals on the one hand, and social democrats on the other. The blows are becoming ever more painful. The economy is adrift. The

people are at the end of their rope.'[1439] Yakovlev replied that the time for decisive action had come and that Gorbachev should take charge of a comprehensive reform effort in political, economic, and nationality affairs.[1440] This was essentially the course of action favoured by many participants at the founding conference of the Democratic Platform of the CPSU, held on 20-21 January, with 405 party members from 78 cities attending, including the leaders of the Interregional Group from the Congress of People's Deputies; representatives of strike committees from mining areas; Yakovlev and Yeltsin; presidential advisor Shakhnazarov; political scientist Fyodor Burlatsky; sociologist Tatyana Zaslyavskaya; economists Nikolai Shmelev and Gavril Popov; historian Yuri Afanasyev; legal scholar and (later Leningrad mayor) Anatoli Sobchak; and the future leader of Russia's Democratic Party, Nikolai Travkin.[1441] In the Politburo meeting of 29 January, the CC secretary for economic administration Nikolai Slyunkov proposed reform measures along the lines of Stanislav Shatalin's plan for the radical reconstruction of the Soviet economy.[1442] However, as on almost any other question of domestic politics and economic affairs, Gorbachev adopted a middle course of action.

In the political domain, prior to a crucial Central Committee meeting, first scheduled for the end of January and then held on 6 February, Gorbachev endorsed the abolition of article 6; objected to the postponement of a party congress to be held in July 1990 for the adoption of a new party program; replaced several regional party bosses; met with a group of militant miners; and permitted the largest-ever rally to take place in the Soviet Union on the day before the CC plenum in the large square around Hotel Moskva, with more than 200,000 people demonstrating for reform. However, he rejected the idea that a new executive president be chosen by direct popular elections, opting instead for elections to that office by the *Congress of People's Deputies*. In the economic realm, he instructed prime

1439 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 330. Literally, 'What should I do? What should I do?'

1440 Ibid.

1441 Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, p. 404; on the organization and composition of the conference, see Matlock, *Autopsy of an Empire*, pp. 306-7.

1442 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 333.

minister Ryzhkov to supplement essentially traditional government reform measures by some 'elements' of Slyunkov's reform program.[1443]

The sense of malaise and apparent intractability of mounting problems in what came known to be the winter of discontent was deepened by the nationality problem. In Azerbaijan, the National Front, legalized by party secretary Abdul Rakhman Vezirov a few months earlier, took advantage of the Nagorny Karabakh issue to gain a mass following and began to force out communist officials in several cities.[1444] On 13 January, in a repetition of the massacres that had taken place in the industrial city of Sumgait two years earlier, mobs attacked apartment houses in which Armenian families were living and killed the occupants. Women and children were thrown from upper-story windows to their death on the pavement below. The National Front took control of key points in Baku and, in effect, began to seize control of the republic. On 15 January, Moscow ordered troops into the area and, starting on the night of 19 January, entered Baku and used force to restore both law and order and the communist party to power, arresting the leaders of the National Front and dissolving informal organizations. The intervention, however, neither succeeded in suppressing the drive for independence in Azerbaijan nor did it stifle unrest in its Nakhichevan exclave beyond Armenian territory or mitigate the conflict between the two Transcaucasian republics. Civil unrest and independence movements also continued in neighbouring Georgia.

The problem in the Baltic republics could not be defused in the same manner, not even temporarily: in contrast to the violence in Azerbaijan, the mass demonstrations in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were peaceful, providing no obvious pretext for military intervention. Its moral and legal basis would have been extremely shaky because of the secret protocols attached to the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact and the accession of the Baltic States

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1443 Ibid. It is difficult to say, of course, what the outcome of popular elections for a presidential contender campaigning on a radical reformist platform would have been. At that crucial juncture of Soviet history, Gorbachev's popularity was on the decline, but the argument can be made that this was due primarily to perceptions of his indecisiveness. According to polls conducted by the reputable VTsIOM polling organization, it was not until May 1990 that Yeltsin, his likely main competitor, moved ahead of him in the popular standing; *Reitingi Borisa El'tsina i Mikhaila Gorbacheva po 10-bal'noi shkale* (Moscow: VTsIOM, 1993); as quoted by Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, p. 203.

1444 This summary of the events in Azerbaijan follows the account by Matlock, *Autopsy of an Empire*, pp. 301-4.

to the Soviet Union in 1940 under duress. The United States had never recognized their incorporation in the USSR. Public opinion in that country and in Western Europe might look with equanimity upon the use of force against 'uncivilized' Moslem nationalists in the distant Transcaucasia but certainly not in a Western-oriented part of Europe. However, a decision in Moscow about what, if anything, to do about the Baltic problem had to be taken in the winter of discontent after the Lithuanian CP had declared its independence. Given the monolithic, vertical structure of both the Soviet Union and the CPSU, that is, the lack of a genuine federalism in the state and the party, such a declaration by a republican CP was tantamount to a declaration of independence of the country. This was clearly recognized by the centre.

On 3 January Vadim Medvedev went to Vilnius to prepare a three-day visit, with Gorbachev and Politburo and deputy prime minister Yuri Maslyukov at the head of a 40-member CC delegation. Their purpose was to persuade the Lithuanian CP to reverse its secession from the CPSU and to retract its demands for Lithuanian independence. The Soviet party chief's mission to Vilnius from 11 to 13 January predictably failed to convince the Lithuanians that their future would be better served by staying in the union – a failure made even more complete by his utter incomprehension of the very essence of nationalism. 'Gorbachev,' as Chernyaev observed, 'deep down could not reconcile himself to a secession of the Baltic republics [from the Soviet Union]. He sincerely believed that in particular, the population of the [Baltic] republics would suffer. He was therefore convinced that extremists and separatists had turned the people's heads.'[1445] In his memoirs, Gorbachev still betrays utter incomprehension of Baltic nationalism, repeating the same arguments he had made in Vilnius. He scornfully dismissed the Balts' economic grievances, saying that, in comparison to the rest of the Soviet Union, the superior labour productivity of the Baltic states had been made possible by 'immense investments from the union budget' and by 'qualified specialists and workers from Russia and other union republics,' and that the three republics' economic development had been assisted by 'the delivery of fuel and energy free of charge [sic]'.[1446] Against the background of a general economic crisis in the Soviet Union and with the people of the Baltic countries com-

1445 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 339.

1446 Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 1, p. 511. By the (absurd) 'free of charge' claim Gorbachev perhaps meant that, given the fact that the Baltic union republics were

paring their economic fortunes with that of the neighbouring Finns and Swedes, the appeals to economic rationality remained unconvincing. The drive for Baltic independence thus remained and thereby the threat to the existence of the Soviet internal empire.

On 22 March, this threat was considered serious enough for the Politburo to discuss the Lithuanian problem and to support a plan by Gen. Valentin Varennikov that closely resembled the script for the Warsaw Pact's intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968: appeals for help by pro-Soviet factions, invasion of Lithuania by three regiments, isolation of the legally elected leadership in Vilnius and the creation of a presidential regime with emergency powers. For reasons that are still unclear, the apparent Politburo consensus on the use of force ('Yakovlev and Medvedev said nothing') failed to be implemented, and military intervention as a means for bringing the Baltic republics to heel was temporarily replaced by severe economic pressure.[1447]

To return to the centre's problem of external empire, the acceptance of German unification was – figuratively speaking – squeezed in between the use of force in Baku and contemplation of the use of force in Vilnius, and between pressures for more radical democratic political and economic reform and reinstitution of the old methods to maintain Soviet power. It would be an exaggeration to say that the German problem had become a side issue but it certainly was not on top of the Soviet leaders' agenda in the winter of discontent. Nevertheless, on 26 January, Gorbachev convened a small circle of top decision makers in his Central Committee office to discuss it. In addition to the Soviet party chief and Chernyaev, his

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part of the Soviet Union and its internal market, no export duties were levied on oil and gas.

1447 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 337. Chernyaev was present at the Politburo meeting. Soviet ground forces commander Varennikov can be considered as one of the most uncompromising generals in favor of the use of force in order to maintain the internal empire. He was in charge in January 1991 when an attempt was made to overthrow the legitimately elected Lithuanian leaders and institutions. On that occasion, soldiers fired on demonstrators at the Vilnius television tower. At least fourteen people were killed and hundreds injured: they were shot, beaten, or crushed under tank treads. Varennikov was also solidly behind the August 1991 coup attempt, again advocating the use of force to dislodge Yeltsin from the White House; see Brian Taylor, 'The Soviet Military and the Disintegration of the USSR', paper (unpubl.) presented in the Olin Critical Issues Series, The Collapse of the Soviet Union, Harvard University, 11 February 1997.

personal aide on foreign policy, the participants included prime minister Ryzhkov; foreign minister Shevardnadze; New Political Thinking architect and Politburo international affairs coordinator (*kurator*) Yakovlev; KGB chief Kryuchkov; arms control adviser to Gorbachev and former chief of staff Akhromeev; ID head Falin; personal aide to Gorbachev for relations with the socialist countries Shakhnazarov; and ID deputy head Fyodorov, responsible for these countries at the ID. The discussion, 'tough' at times, lasted four hours and a 'number of most important decisions were adopted'.[1448]

One of the questions to be decided was the problem as to who, in the conditions of an accelerated drive towards German unity, should be the Soviet leadership's main addressee for the management of the problem, East Germany or West Germany; if the former, who in that country – the Modrow government, Gysi's PDS, or the Roundtable? If it was to be Bonn, should then the negotiation partner be chancellor Kohl and the ruling coalition of CDU/CSU and FDP, or the opposition SPD? Chernyaev was the first to speak, emphasizing that the Soviet Union no longer had any influence or political forces in the GDR on which it could count. Thus, *West Germany* should be the main addressee of Soviet policy. And in that country, he continued, one should deal with the chancellor, not with the opposition. His rationale was that the social democrats were politicizing and using the issue in their electoral campaign. Kohl, on the other hand, was aiming at German unification as part of a European process, was in close association with his NATO partners and more reliable in his personal relations with Gorbachev. He even went as far as arguing against inviting Modrow, the East German prime minister, for a visit to Moscow, let alone SED party chief Gysi, the head of a 'party that *de facto* no longer exists and that has no future'.[1449] Yakovlev, Falin, Shakhnazarov and Fyodorov disagreed and opted for political contacts and cooperation with the

1448 Alexander Galkin and Anatoli Chernyaev, 'Pravdu i tol'ko pravdu. Razmyshleniia po povodu vospominanii', *Svobodnaia mysl,* No. 3 (1994), p. 26; Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 346; interviews with Chernyaev and Shakhnazarov. In his memoirs, Falin (*Erinnerungen*, p. 489) lists Yazov as one of the participants, but in his interviews with this author Chernyaev has emphatically denied that this is correct. Shakhnazarov (*Tsena svobody*, p. 125) lists Ivashko (presumably Vladimir Ivashko, the party chief in Ukraine), as one of the participants, but this, too, appears to be incorrect. As usual, the written account and later oral clarifications by Chernyaev are more reliable.

1449 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 346.

SPD. Shevardnadze and Ryzhkov (with the reservation of 'let's not give everything to Kohl') in essence supported Chernyaev. Kryuchkov was prepared to align himself with the opinion of the majority but agreed that the state structures of the GDR were dissolving and that there was no one on whom the Soviet Union could base its policies.

An important decision adopted at the meeting, in accordance with a corresponding proposal by Chernyaev, was the creation of a negotiation framework of six countries, comprising the two Germanys and the four occupation powers with special rights and responsibilities in Germany. A final decision was to have Akhromeev draw up plans for the withdrawal of troops from Germany.

Gorbachev summarized the results of the meeting as follows:

– To form a Group of Six.
– To orient policies toward Kohl but not to ignore the SPD.
– To invite Modrow and Gysi.
– To maintain close contact with London and Paris.
– To prepare the withdrawal of forces from the GDR.[1450]

In the context of decision-making theory at the micro-level and explanation of the collapse of empire at the macro-level of analysis, three aspects of the meeting deserve emphasis. First, the decisions that, in essence, amounted to the consent to German unification were made by an *ad hoc* committee, not by one of the established institutions, such as the Politburo or the Defense Council. Second, as corroboration of the first point and as an indication of the severe internal crisis and the pre-eminence of domestic politics over foreign policy, two Politburo meetings held at about that time did *not* address the German problem: the only agenda item of the PB meeting of 22 January was the draft of a new CPSU platform, and the PB session of 29 January dealt with the precarious state of finance and the creation of a presidential office.[1451] Third, one of the institutions that, in the era of the dominance of the ideological and imperial paradigm, would have been represented first and foremost was missing altogether at the meeting: the defense ministry. There has been controversy as to whether the *ad hoc* group, or any other group, was authorized by the PB and institutionalized specifically to deal with the German crisis. Falin unambigu-

1450 Ibid., p. 347. Contrary to the assertion by Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 163, the issue of united Germany's membership in NATO does not appear to have been discussed.

1451 Ibid., pp. 327 and 332.

ously states that, as early as at the time of the opening of the Berlin wall, an executive, emergency or crisis committee (*Krisenstab*) had been 'formed upon my initiative'.[1452] He claims that the following leaders participated in its first meeting: Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, Yakovlev, Chernyaev, Shakhnazarov, Kryuchkov *and* Defense Minister Yazov. He also states that the committee met only once more in its entirety. However, no date is given for the first or any subsequent meeting, and it is likely that the ID chief got confused here. In a rebuttal of Falin's portrayal, Chernyaev denies ('does not remember') the existence of such a *Krisenstab* and correctly states that Gorbachev's memoirs contain no reference to it.[1453]

What is most likely behind the controversy over the emergency committee is, to put it in precise political science terminology, sour grapes. The decisions adopted by the *ad hoc* committee and subsequent decisions on the German problem were a direct challenge to the once influential *germanisty* and the once so powerful International Department of the Central Committee. Falin happened to be an exponent of both. They contradicted the interests and advice of ID first deputy head Fyodorov, another specialist in German affairs, who was untiring in his effort to get a campaign under way in the Soviet Union and abroad against German unification[1454] and who, in the *ad hoc* meeting, still declared: '*No one in the Federal Republic wants reunification.*'[1455] They also ran counter to the positions adopted by Bondarenko, the chief of the MFA's Third Department, and Gorald Gorinovich, the head of the Fourth Department (restructured to deal with the dwindling number of socialist countries), all of whose caution and conservatism was disregarded by Gorbachev and Shevardnadze.[1456] 'It was exasperating', Falin later complained bitterly, 'to see how Gorbachev would express his definitive agreement with a particular issue in my presence while his foreign minister would do exactly the opposite, without Gorbachev putting him into place.'[1457]

Gorbachev's acceptance of German unification became a matter of international public record four days after the *ad hoc* meeting, when Mod-

1452 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 489.
1453 Galkin and Chernyaev, 'Pravdu i tol'ko pravdu', p. 25.
1454 Interview with Grigoriev.
1455 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 346.
1456 Interviews with Kvitsinsky and Tarasenko.
1457 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 491.

row visited Moscow, and was confirmed in the Soviet leader's talks with Baker on 9 February, and Kohl and Genscher on 10 and 11 February. Both privately and publicly, Gorbachev no longer referred to the GDR as the Soviet Union's strategic ally and reliable member of the Warsaw Pact to which no harm would be done. That terminology was irrevocably removed from the discourse and policy. In private conversation with Modrow, Gorbachev instead endorsed the East German government's hastily construed plan to lead from a treaty on cooperation and good neighbourliness between the two German states to a confederation and ultimately to a unified federal state.[1458] Only some faint echo of the previous hard-line approach reverberated in the meeting. He would not permit Kohl to destabilize the situation in the GDR, Gorbachev said. Apart from that, the conversation had a more philosophical – typically Gorbachevian – rather than practical content. 'Unfortunately', Modrow complained in retrospect, 'Gorbachev is not the kind of man who would delve deeply into economic problems. In our consultations on economic problems he always avoided this issue and transferred it to Ryzhkov. But in doing so, he didn't in the least commit himself and failed to provide instructions that Ryzhkov would have to carry out.'[1459] As the talks underlined, his endorsement of the Modrow plan was at least in part predicated on the idea that the SPD would support it.[1460] Whereas this notion was not far-fetched, Gorbachev still harboured illusions about the 18 March elections, assuming that the East Germans would vote for the continued existence of the GDR.[1461]

Publicly, Gorbachev went on record after the meeting with the acknowledgment that pressure was building up for German reunification: '*Time itself is having an impact on the process and lending dynamism to it*.'[1462] Asked about the question of German reunification by an East German television reporter, Gorbachev replied:

1458 Modrow, *Aufbruch und Ende*, pp. 119-23. In addition to Gorbachev, the Soviet participants in the meeting were Ryzhkov, Shevardnadze, and Falin.

1459 Ibid. Modrow, in this context, specifically mentioned the problem of Soviet oil deliveries to the GDR. Gorbachev evaded the issue.

1460 Modrow confirmed this in the interview series conducted by Ekkehard Kuhn in 1993, *id*., *Gorbatschow und die deutsche Einheit*, p. 101.

1461 Ibid.

1462 Francis, X. Clines, 'Gorbachev Sees a German Union But Warns of "Chaos of Nihilism"', *New York Times*, 31 January 1990.

> *Basically, no one casts any doubt upon it.* However, the development of events in the world, in the German Democratic Republic, and in the Soviet Union requires profound assessment and an analytical approach to a solution of an issue which is an important aspect of European and world politics.

It was 'essential,' however, 'to act responsibly and not seek a solution to this important issue in the streets.' He elaborated on that point and warned that the 'chaos of nihilism, the *diktat* of the crowd' remained dangerous obstacles to the East European processes of democratization. He also warned of the danger of 'neo-Nazi excesses' in the GDR. 'Attempts by radical right-wing forces to incite neo-Nazi attitudes in the republic are among the most dangerous obstacles' to increasing democratization, he thought. Finally, he invoked 'Four Power obligations' for Germany.[1463]

Gorbachev's remarks on 30 January were correctly interpreted in West Germany as removing Soviet objections as the single most important impediment to reunification. Probably in reaction to this, Shevardnadze, in an interview with Soviet reporters, attempted to tone done the consequences of the Gorbachev statements and again to slow down the momentum towards reunification, saying that 'It is not the idea of reunification itself but the revival of the sinister shadows of the past associated with it as well as a possible growth of militarism that are met with apprehension in the world.'[1464] 'All peoples', he said, 'especially those of the Soviet Union, must have a guarantee that the war threat will never come from German soil.' How was this to be achieved? A '*European-wide referendum with the participation of the United States and Canada*' should be held, he suggested, or at least matters should be decided 'by broad discussion in the parliaments'.[1465] It is difficult to say why Shevardnadze tabled the referendum proposal. Not only was such an idea hardly workable but it was sure to be rejected, first and foremost by the West German government.

The consent in principle to German unification immediately raised the problem of unified Germany's international status. Shortly after his return from Moscow, at a press conference in East Berlin, Modrow presented some guidelines. Alluding to the image of a common European house, Modrow stated that his plan was 'founded on the idea that already in the stage of confederation, both German states will step by step *detach them-*

1463 Ibid.
1464 'Po povodu pozitsii pravitel'stva GDR', *Pravda*, 3 February 1990.
1465 Ibid. (italics mine).

selves from their alliance obligations toward third countries and attain a state of military neutrality'. He later reiterated that several conditions had to be met on the way to unity, including 'maintenance of the interests and rights' of the Four Powers in both Germanys and '*military neutrality of both the GDR and the FRG*'.[1466] Modrow's remarks, coming so soon after his Moscow visit, implied that the idea of a neutral Germany had been discussed with and approved by the Soviet leadership.[1467]

Soviet acceptance of German unification formed the basis of discussion in the meetings between Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and Baker on 8-9 February.[1468] Shevardnadze regretted that unification was arriving faster than anyone had expected. In fact, it was already a fait accompli: 'I am afraid that's the case, and I'm not sure of any way to avoid it.' He nevertheless supported the Modrow plan for the process to take place gradually and in distinct phases. In accordance with his pessimistic view of both history and world affairs (and perhaps to buttress his ideas for Four Power negotiations, a peace treaty, a European-wide referendum, or CSCE involvement, whatever the West would accept) he expressed worries about domestic developments in Germany. The neo-Nazis might gain power. The right-wing *Republikaner* were a serious force in the country and might receive as much as 20 percent of the vote, he thought.

In *his* talks with Baker, Gorbachev adopted a much more unconcerned and cooperative stance than his foreign minister. 'There is nothing terrifying in the prospect of a unified Germany', he said. He knew that some countries, such as France and Britain, were concerned about who would be the major player in Europe. But this was not a Soviet or an American problem: 'We are big countries and have our own weight.' He also referred to a 'mosaic' of opinion in West Germany about unification. Some

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1466 'Hans Modrow unterbreitet Konzept "Für Deutschland, einig Vaterland"', *Neues Deutschland*, 2 February 1990.

1467 Modrow confirmed this in the interview series conducted by Ekkehard Kuhn in 1993, *id*., *Gorbatschow und die deutsche Einheit*, p. 101. The issue of German neutrality, or neutralization, versus membership of a united Germany in NATO will be discussed in the next section.

1468 The account of the meetings between Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, and Baker is based on the American memcons of the talks, as summarized by Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 179-85. Note taker was Dennis Ross. Confirmation of several points was provided also by Ambassador Jack Matlock, who was present at the talks, in conversation with this author on 10 February 1997 in Cambridge, Mass.

wanted a confederation, others a federation. Opinion was also divided on NATO membership, some supported it; others favoured neutralism; yet others preferred a confederation wherein both countries would retain their alliance memberships until the current alliances were replaced by new CSCE structures.

Soviet acceptance of German unification as a fait accompli also posed the problem as to the relationship between its internal and external aspects. Two main issues had to be addressed: one concerning the West German constitutional provisions for such a contingency, the other the question as to which of the two aspects should be decided first. On the first issue, German unity could be achieved on the basis of two constitutional provisions. Article 23 of the Basic Law provided for accession, that is, there would be no necessity for constitutional revision. The existing West German political and socio-economic system would simply be extended to East Germany. A West Germany writ large would be created. Unification in accordance with article 146, on the other hand, necessitated convocation of a new constitutional assembly and the adoption of a new constitution by referendum; this would conceivably have given East Germany and, by extension, the Soviet Union a chance to influence the direction and outcome of the process.[1469] On the second issue, the question to be decided was whether the internal or the external aspects of German unification should take precedence, or whether both should be resolved simultaneously. Falin's position and that of his conservative fellow *germanisty* in the ID and the MFA was unambiguous. As Falin put it: 'Unification – yes, *Anschluss* – no. Only the socio-economic status of the unified Germany could and should be determined by the Germans. The external, that is, the military-political conditions of unification were to be decided by the Four Powers together with the two German states *before the FRG and the GDR were joined*.'[1470] Furthermore, in Falin's view, 'the Four Plus Two formula reflected the correct priorities. Securing European peace had

1469 The exact wording of article 23 is that 'For the time being, the Basic Law shall apply in the territory of the Länder. ... In other parts of Germany it shall be put into force upon their accession.' Article 146 provides: 'The Basic Law shall cease to be in force on the day on which a constitution adopted by a free decision of the German people comes into force'; *Grundgesetz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, 1987).

1470 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 490 (italics mine).

to come first; once a satisfactory solution was attained on this aspect, solution of the other issue would follow promptly.'[1471]

In retrospect, the emergence and adoption of the Two Plus Four formula has acquired an almost mythical quality. In the Western context, notably among American officials involved in the management of the international aspects of German unification, it has been portrayed as an example of brilliant statecraft that originated in the State Department.[1472] Chernyaev has minimized its importance. In an article co-authored with German expert Alexander Galkin, and in reference to the 26 January *ad hoc* meeting, he states that *he* had been the first to advance this proposal but that Baker, on many occasions, was to say that the Americans had developed it.[1473] In Russian or post-Soviet controversies over the collapse of the Soviet empire and the loss of East Germany, this question has also become a bone of contention, pulled in different directions by supporters and critics of Gorbachev.[1474] Falin, for instance, has vehemently attacked both Gorbachev and Shevardnadze for mismanaging the issue, conveying the notion that it had not all been resolved as late as June 1990. Shevardnadze, according to Falin, had returned from the foreign ministers' meeting of the Six in East Berlin, 'acting like a *dzhigit* [daring horseman], sitting high on a white horse'. He appeared exceedingly confident and caused everyone's hopes to be rekindled. Chernyaev prepared a press release in the president's name, in which the significance of the negotiations as a whole and of the Four Plus Two formula in particular was to be proclaimed. He called Shevardnadze, read the text to him and the minister approved it except for a 'slight "specification"': the *Two Plus Four* formula was to be preferred. Chernyaev was outraged, not least because Gorbachev had made it absolutely clear that only the Four Plus Two formula was acceptable. The Soviet foreign minister justified this change by saying that 'Genscher really pleaded for it, and Genscher is a good person'. Nevertheless, despite Chernyaev's purported intervention, the Two Plus Four formula 'came into effect' and the Soviet Union, as a result, manoeuvred itself into a 'dead

1471 Ibid., p. 491.

1472 One does get a strong sense of this, for instance, in Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 167-68. The authors credit Secretary of State Baker's advisers Dennis Ross and Robert Zoellick with having invented the Two Plus Four formula.

1473 Galkin and Chernyaev, 'Pravdu i tol'ko pravdu', p. 26.

1474 This controversy is most apparent in Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, pp. 491-92, and Galkin and Chernyaev, 'Pravdu i tol'ko pravdu', pp. 26-27.

end'.[1475] What, then, given the apparent sensitivity of the matter, is its significance?

Chernyaev has reduced apparent complexities to their simple essence: 'The important thing was that it should be possible quickly to design a successful mechanism that, on the one hand, would grant the Germans the right to select the path to unification by themselves and, on the other, give the USSR, USA, England, and France a chance to realize their right to advance the interests of the international community and their own in the process of German unification.'[1476] As for Falin's portrayal of the alleged haphazard and unprofessional reversal of the sequence of the numbers in response to Genscher's pleas, Chernyaev has scathingly dismissed it as a complete fabrication.[1477] '[First], no one took any decision on this question. And it would have been strange if someone had. Second, the division of the Six into two groups was of a spontaneous character. Some used the first variant of the "sum", others – the second. And each, of course, [used it] with a sub-text.' Furthermore, he (Chernyaev) 'could not have been "outraged" by the transformation of the Two Plus Four formula because [I] was always indifferent to the sequence of letters, considering that by itself the sequence could have no real influence on the course of events.' As for Gorbachev, he too 'did not pay any particular attention to the sequence of the numbers. When he mentioned the formula, he would use it either way'. As reflected in his talks with chancellor Kohl in Moscow on 10 February (see below), 'this corresponded with his position of principle'.[1478] Not quite, perhaps. Gorbachev initially did prefer the Two Plus Four sequence. Thus, in his talks with Baker, according to the American record, Gorbachev had asked: 'I say Four Plus Two; you say Two Plus Four. How do you look at this formula?', to which Baker had replied: 'Two Plus Four is a better way.'[1479]

The Soviet consent to German unification occurred most authoritatively and unequivocally during Chancellor Kohl's visit to Moscow on 10-11 February. Eight days earlier, the West German chancellor had finally received a long-awaited letter from the Soviet party leader with the invitation. Upon arrival at Moscow's Vnukovo airport, the chancellor received

1475 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, pp. 491-92.
1476 Galkin and Chernyaev, 'Pravdu, i tol'lko pravdu', p. 26.
1477 Interview with Chernyaev.
1478 Galkin and Chernyaev, 'Pravdu, i tol'lko pravdu,' pp. 26-27.
1479 Memcon of the talks, as quoted by Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 182.

another letter, this one from Baker, summarizing the content of his talks with the Soviet leaders.[1480] When the talks began, therefore, Kohl was well briefed on the new direction of Gorbachev's thinking, but uncertain whether it would be confirmed in *his* talks with the Soviet leader.

The initial welcome accorded to Kohl by Gorbachev in the latter's Kremlin office (in the presence of personal assistants Teltschik and Chernyaev and the interpreters) was cool, and Gorbachev appeared deeply pensive. [1481] Kohl assured Gorbachev of the German people's empathy with and support for his reform efforts and, in response to a presentation by the General Secretary of the problems encountered with perestroika, reiterated that the West German government was prepared, as far as possible, to expand economic relations with the GDR and the USSR. As evident in the delivery of foodstuffs subsidized by the Bonn government in January, it was also willing to extend tangible economic assistance.[1482]

Kohl described the deteriorating conditions in the GDR and the accelerated drive in that part of Germany towards the re-establishment of German unity. Presumably conscious of international concern about the West German government's position concerning the finality of Poland's western borders, he clarified that his government had no intention to call in

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1480 The letter was handed to him by the West German ambassador in Moscow, Klaus Blech.

1481 The subsequent account of the visit by Kohl and Genscher to Moscow is based on Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 253-82; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 137-44; and Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 722-24. − The most extensive account is that by Kohl. The account, however, contains some inaccuracies on Soviet internal politics. The two journalists authorized to edit his memoirs (Kai Diekmann and Ralf Georg Reuth) quote Kohl to the effect that, 'After the doors had closed behind us [in Gorbachev's office in the Kremlin, in the afternoon on 10 February], I [Kohl] congratulated Mikhail Gorbachev on his assumption of the office of president. In fact, there had been a lively debate about the creation of this office because not everyone supported the [attendant] concentration of power. In the end, however, Gorbachev was elected with a large majority of the votes.' This portrayal contains two mistakes. Gorbachev was elected president only with a *small* majority, with only 59 percent of the members of the Congress of Deputies voting for him, and the elections did not take place prior to Kohl's Moscow visit but only one month *thereafter*, on 15 March 1990; see *Vneocherednyi tretii s"ezd narodnykh deputatov SSSR, 12-15 marta 1990 g. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Izdanie Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1990).

1482 The economic and financial aspects of Gorbachev's acceptance of German unification and his consent to unified Germany's membership in NATO will be discussed in context; see below, pp. 539-58.

question Poland's current borders but that he wanted the consent of the German refugees from the areas east of the Oder and Neisse rivers. Furthermore, the 1970 Moscow and the 1972 Warsaw treaty had been concluded by the western part of a divided country, not by a united Germany (the implication of that observation being that only the latter could decide on the finality of the border). He also told his host that neutralization of a united Germany would find no acceptance (presumably both domestically and internationally) and that, as developments after 1918 had shown, any special international status for Germany would be a historic mistake. Gorbachev agreed that the issue of Germany's alliance membership was a central problem, and he also endorsed Kohl's interjection that, whereas the Soviet Union wanted to see its security interests safeguarded, Germany wanted to regain full sovereignty.

Discussion then turned to developments in the GDR. Gorbachev wanted to know whether the campaign for the 18 March elections in East Germany was not contributing to a division of society. Kohl rejected that notion and added that a more tranquil development would have been possible if Honecker had decided to introduce reform measures. With an air of resignation, his interlocutor asserted (quite at variance with the facts) that time and again he had urged Honecker to do just that, but in vain. He then wanted to be informed of Kohl's views on the electoral campaign itself and was told in response that the starting position of the SPD was better than that of the other parties. Thuringia and Saxony had traditionally been strongholds of social democracy and Willy Brandt, Kohl complained, was criss-crossing East Germany like some bishop blessing his flock, a metaphor that was countered by Gorbachev with the remark that he (Kohl), too, wasn't exactly sitting around at home with folded hands and that West Germany (the government, presumably) tried to influence East German affairs through all sorts of channels.

In the course of the conversation, Gorbachev abandoned his detached demeanour, and the atmosphere became more relaxed. Finally, in what was obviously a well prepared statement, Gorbachev formally told Kohl:

> I believe that there is no divergence of opinion between the Soviet Union, the Federal Republic and the GDR about unity and the right of the people to strive for unity and to decide on the further development. There is agreement between you and me that *the Germans themselves have to make their choice.*

> *The Germans in the Federal Republic and in the GDR themselves have to know what road they want to take.*[1483]

Gorbachev thus had formally handed to Kohl the key to German unity. 'This is the breakthrough! Gorbachev is consenting to German unification ...', Teltschik confided to his diary as having been his reaction to Gorbachev's statement.[1484] The West German chancellor, too, was immediately aware of the historic significance of what Gorbachev had said and, wanting to make sure that there was no misunderstanding, repeated the Soviet leader's words. There was no misunderstanding. Teltschik was 'jubilant', even though both he and the chancellor refrained from expressing that or any other emotion.

Not only was Gorbachev handing over the key to German unity, but for all practical purposes he was doing so *unconditionally*. He merely elaborated on his formal consent and explained that unification had to occur in the context of realities, including the fact that there had been a war in which the people of the Soviet Union had suffered more than any other. Confrontation and the division now had to be overcome, and he believed that the Germans in East and West had already demonstrated that they had learned from history. What about neutrality as a condition for yielding the key? He knew, Gorbachev said, that German neutrality would be unacceptable for Kohl; that it would be humiliating to the German people; and that it would appear as if all the contributions the Germans had made to peace would be ignored. Nevertheless, he still saw a united Germany outside the military alliances and disagreed with the notion that at least one part of Germany could be in NATO, with the other remaining in the Warsaw Pact.[1485] Nowhere in the conversation, however, did Gorbachev pose German neutrality as an inexorable or inalienable end result of unification. 'Yet another sensation', Teltschik was to confide to his diary, 'Gorbachev does not commit himself to a specific solution; no demand of a price, and certainly no threat. What a meeting!'[1486]

What about processes of negotiation and the link between the internal and external aspects of German unification? The two leaders agreed, in accordance with what Gorbachev had told Baker, that representatives of the

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1483 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 272 (italics mine).
1484 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 140.
1485 On this issue, the accounts by Kohl and Teltschik differ somewhat; for details, see the next section.
1486 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 141.

two German states and the Four Powers should find acceptable solutions. Kohl again rejected an exclusive Four Power framework and Gorbachev assured his guest: 'Nothing [will be decided] without you.'[1487]

The Soviet public was informed of the historic decisions. Earlier, after Modrow's visit, it had been confronted with the fact that the leadership considered German unification inevitable. Now it was being told that the Germans had the right to decide on the speed and direction of the corresponding process and that, essentially, Moscow would set no preconditions. In fact, the TASS report on the meeting went even farther than what Gorbachev had said (as reported by Kohl and Teltschik in their published accounts) but was closer to what Kohl told an international press conference on the night after the talks. Published on page one of *Pravda*, the report said:

> Gorbachev stated, and the chancellor agreed, that there is at present no divergence concerning the view that the Germans themselves have to solve the question of unity of the German nation and *choose the forms of statehood and at what time, at what speed, and under what conditions* they will realize that unity.[1488]

The report also noted correctly Gorbachev's reference to the realities that had to be taken into consideration and that the rapprochement between the two German states should not 'damage the positive results that have been achieved in East-West relations and rupture the balance [of power] in Europe'.[1489] Such qualifications, albeit without any reference to the balance of power in Europe, were publicly reiterated by the West German chancellor at the international press conference. He and Gorbachev had agreed, Kohl stated, that 'the German problem can be solved only on the basis of realities, that is, that it must be embedded in the architecture of all of Europe. We must take into account the legitimate interests of our neighbours, friends and partners in Europe and the world'.[1490]

1487 Ibid., p. 274.

1488 'Vstrecha M.S. Gorbacheva i G. Kolia', *Pravda*, 11 February 1990 (italics mine). On 10 February, late at night, at the Soviet Union's International Press Center, Kohl had said that Gorbachev had 'unequivocally agreed that he will respect the decision of the Germans to live in one state and that it is up to the Germans to decide the timing and the road to unification.'

1489 Ibid.

1490 Craig R. Whitney, 'Kohl Says Moscow Agrees Unity Issue is Up to Germans', *New York Times*, 11 February 1990.

In addition to the top private level, the Soviet-West German exchanges occurred in three other venues. First, Shevardnadze and Genscher held separate talks. In what, according to the West German foreign minister, was 'obviously coordinated between Gorbachev and Shevardnadze', the external aspects of German unification and the international negotiation process formed the main topic of the conversation. Genscher, apparently not contradicted by Shevardnadze, proposed using the upcoming (12-13 February) Open Skies foreign ministers' conference of the member states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact in Ottawa to agree on the Two Plus Four ('in that order') format.[1491] Second, in the evening of 10 February, in the Kremlin's Garnet Room, with the members of the German delegation and some of the major Soviet policy-makers, including Yakovlev and the German experts, assembled around the table, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze explained the results of their talks with Kohl and Genscher. Third, conversations took place also during a formal dinner in the St. Catherine's hall of the Kremlin.

The last two venues were instructive of Soviet domestic dissonance. Gorbachev's explanations of the results of his talks with Kohl in the Garnet Room were met with utter disbelief by Falin and Bondarenko; the West German chancellor observed 'naked horror on their faces'.[1492] At the banquet, the two officials as well as Academician Sergei Kovalev failed to share the generally relaxed, almost jocular, spirit: Falin looked 'somber' and he and the other two did 'not want to loosen up'.[1493] Evidently with a mixture of pique and irony, Falin told Zagladin that now that the German problem had been solved, they could leave on pension.[1494] It is plausible to infer from these reactions that the 'professionals' at the MFA and ID had not been informed by Gorbachev about the far-reaching extent of his concessions and that this was yet another major instance of his brushing aside their reservations and hesitations. Gorbachev's supporters made some efforts at damage limitation. MFA spokesman Gerasimov thus re-

1491 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 723. Whereas Genscher's account of the talks is exceedingly brief, Shevardnadze's is nonexistent: in his memoirs, he leaves out entirely the 10-11 February Moscow meeting(s), turning directly from a description of his 19 December Brussels speech to his role at the 12-13 February Ottawa conference.

1492 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 275.

1493 Ibid., p. 276. '*Auftauen*' is the German original.

1494 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 142.

gretted the 'bias' and 'euphoria' in West German journalistic and official comment on the Kohl visit. It was correct, he said, that 'we have declared that the Germans themselves have to decide the question of the unification of the German nation, including its speed, dates, conditions, and provisions'. But this was not the complete picture. The German problem 'does not exist in isolation but in a political, historical, geographic, and even psychological context'.[1495]

The conservative component at the MFA, however, tried to rescue as much as they could. In particular, they were intent on dispelling the notion that a unified German state could be created under the 'NATO roof'.[1496] Furthermore, the traditionalists embarked on a general assault on Gorbachev's policies on the German problem. At the 5-7 February Central Committee plenary meeting, hard-liner Ligachev, as usual, had taken the lead. 'I cannot but mention one other thing', he announced at the end of comprehensive criticism of Gorbachev's policies, 'the events in Europe':

> We should not overlook the *impending danger of the accelerated reunification of Germany*, or in fact, the engulfment of the German Democratic Republic. It would be unpardonably short-sighted and a folly not to see that on the world horizon looms a *Germany with a formidable economic and military potential.* Real efforts of the world community, of all democratic forces in the world, are needed in order to prevent in advance the raising of the issue of the revision of the post-war borders and, to put it directly, not to *allow a new Munich*. I believe the time has come to recognize this new danger of our era and tell the party and the people about it in a clear voice. It is not too late.[1497]

But Ligachev's warnings *had* come too late to have an impact on Gorbachev's position in the talks with Kohl. The conservatives had already lost the battle over the internal aspects of German unification as well as the struggle over the forum of negotiations concerning its external aspects. From Gorbachev's perspective and that of West Germany and its allies, the danger now existed that disaffected, disgruntled, and dissatisfied foreign ministry and party officials would combine forces with high-ranking military officers and the secret police to influence the *content* of the negotiations among, as they saw it, the Six. Their position was already unambigu-

1495 Press conference in Moscow, reported by DPA (West German news agency) from Moscow (in German), 12 February 1990.

1496 The term was used by Alexander Bondarenko, 'A pravda takova,' *Trud*, 18 February 1990.

1497 'Vystupleniia v preniiakh po dokladu. E. K. Ligachev', *Pravda*, 7 February 1990.

ous on the central issue of the impending negotiations, that is, united Germany's international status and affiliation with the existing alliances. For them, Germany's membership in NATO, in any shape or form, was completely out of the question.

7. Gorbachev's Consent to United Germany's Membership in NATO

One of the first indications of Gorbachev's realization of the complexities of European security problems that would arise from German unification had, as mentioned, occurred in his meeting with Genscher on 5 December. As part of his blistering attack on Kohl's Ten Points and the West German government's idea of establishing a 'confederation', he had also asked pertinent questions still relating to *two* German states.[1498] Now, however, the question arose as to fit a *united* Germany into a European security architecture. The basic problem, of course, was whether Germany should be neutral − either in the form of a self-declared commitment or as part of a Four Power imposition − or through the extension of West Germany's treaty relations, including membership in NATO, united Germany would remain part of the Atlantic alliance.[1499] However that basic question was to be answered, a myriad of subsidiary problems had to be addressed:

1. What should be the role of the *United States* in Europe, and what should be the size of its military presence?
2. What, conversely, should be the role of the *Soviet Union* in European security affairs?
3. Was it legitimate and, for both East and West Europeans, politically acceptable to proceed from the premise of *equivalency*, that is, from the idea that change in one alliance should be replicated by change in the other? If, for instance, the Soviet Union were prepared to heed Eastern European demands and withdraw its forces from Eastern Europe, should the United States pull back its forces from Western Europe, too?

1498 See above, pp. 548-49.

1499 Theoretically, a third option existed, that of united Germany being a member of both Nato *and* the Warsaw Pact. Gorbachev was to suggest that option (see below, p. 619). How that could conceivably have worked remained obscure. The joint membership proposal, therefore, was never seriously discussed, let alone negotiated.

4. Should *both alliances* be involved in the management of security issues on the European continent? But what about the Warsaw Pact? Should that organization be excluded, since historically it had been the major symbol and instrument of Soviet imperial domination and in 1990 was doomed to oblivion?
5. If the Warsaw Pact were to disintegrate, what should be the *status of its members other than East Germany*? Should they be allowed to join NATO, too, or would the Soviet political and military leaders consider this to be an unacceptable imposition, if not a provocation? Was it realistic to assume that such an option even existed?
6. If, on the other hand, the Warsaw Pact should survive and be involved in the management of European security issues, how much *reform* would be required to make that organization palatable to the new non-communist countries of Eastern Europe and serve their national interests?
7. Again assuming the continued existence of the Warsaw Pact, even if only for a transitional period, what overall *force levels and military equipment* should the two alliances have in Europe?
8. What should be the total *strength of united Germany's armed forces*, and to what extent did its size depend on the country's status, that is, how much of a difference would it make if Germany were to be neutral or a member of NATO?
9. What should be the role of *nuclear weapons* in a new Europe, and what limits (if any) should be placed on their numbers and delivery vehicles, and their modernization? Should they be withdrawn from West Germany?

Daunting as these questions were for any international forum to resolve, they almost paled in comparison with the problems they were likely to cause in the Soviet domestic political context. Ever since its inception, NATO had been portrayed by Soviet political leaders and propagandists as the incarnation of the most aggressive and reactionary tendencies of 'American imperialism' and West Germany as the Pentagon's main staging post in Europe. Gorbachev, as late as December 1989, had termed the GDR the Soviet Union's 'strategic ally' and a reliable member of the Warsaw Pact to which no harm would come. Now, a few months later, his increasingly unpopular leadership was being called upon not only to impute peaceful intentions to NATO and allocate to it a constructive security role in Europe but also to explain why it would be in the Soviet national interest to hand over the GDR to the Western alliance!

In the era of the New Political Thinking, the military had been asked to swallow a series of bitter pills, and it had done so in reasonably good grace. The military in both Czarist Russia and the Soviet Union had traditionally remained aloof from direct political involvement. But to ask it now to cooperate in the dismantling of the Soviet Union's entire strategic glacis and voluntarily agree to a comprehensive realignment of the military balance in Europe could be asking too much. The enormity of the strategic changes contemplated could catapult the armed forces into political action. Acting in conjunction with hard-line factions in the party, the foreign ministry and the KGB they could conceivably bring down the whole edifice of the New Political Thinking including its architects. For Gorbachev and the reformers still committed to him and clamouring for a radicalization of the reform effort, the problem was compounded by the likely exorbitant costs of the withdrawal of the approximately 575,000 Soviet troops still deployed in Eastern Europe. The pull-back of forces, furthermore, raised not only the issue of who was going to pay for that enormous logistical task but also how to integrate the decommissioned officers and non-commissioned officers in the disintegrating fabric of the Soviet economy and society.

Understanding Gorbachev's consent to NATO's first eastward expansion and the final act in the dissolution of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe thus necessitates reconstruction not only of the evolution of his own thinking but also an explanation of why the obvious dangers of a domestic revolt against his policies failed to materialize. The best starting point is a reconsideration of the Soviet leadership's and his attitudes to NATO and to the role of the United States in Europe.

Gorbachev and the Atlantic Alliance

In February 1990, Shevardnadze accurately was to acknowledge that until 'quite recently our aim was to oust the Americans from Europe at any price'.[1500] Indeed, consistently throughout the post-war period, the Soviet leaders had adhered to that aim. For instance, at the Twenty-third CPSU

1500 E. Shevardnadze, 'V mire vse meniaetsia s golovokruzhitel'noi bystrotoi', *Izvestiia*, 19 February 1990. For a detailed analysis of the evolution of Soviet and Russian attitudes, see Hannes Adomeit, 'The Atlantic Alliance in Soviet and Russian Perspectives', in Neil Malcolm, ed., *Russia and Europe: An End to*

Congress in 1966 Shevardnadze's predecessor at the foreign ministry (Gromyko) reminded Washington that president Roosevelt had given a commitment at the Yalta conference in February 1945 that American troops would be withdrawn from Europe within two years. 'Ten times two years have passed', he exclaimed indignantly, 'but the American army is still in Europe and by every indication claims a permanent status here.' He also warned the United States that 'the peoples of Europe are having their say and will have their say on this score'.[1501] Kvitsinsky reiterated his chief's complaints a decade and a half later. In an intemperate outburst to his American counterpart in the Geneva negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) he snapped: 'You have no business in Europe.'[1502] What, then, traditionally, were the reasons for Soviet opposition to the American military presence in Europe?

First, the combination of the economic, technological, and military potential of the United States and West Germany, that is, the build-up of US forces in Europe and the addition of the Bundeswehr to NATO's integrated command structure, significantly strengthened the overall military power and effectiveness of the Atlantic alliance. NATO gave its European members confidence to stand up to Soviet military pressures and placed stringent limits on any increase in Soviet political influence in Western Europe.

Second, the stability of East Germany was always in doubt as long as West Berlin was allowed to act as a showcase of the Western system and a 'thorn in the flesh' of the GDR. But West Berlin's viability and security depended vitally on the United States and its military presence in the city, in Germany and in Europe. This had been the clear lesson of Stalin's Berlin blockade of 1948-49 and Khrushchev's protracted pressure on Berlin from 1958 to 1962.

Third, Soviet control in Eastern Europe would have been more effective without the countervailing power of the Atlantic alliance. Just as a strong

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Confrontation? Royal Institute on International Affairs (London: Pinter, 1994), pp. 31-54.

1501 Gromyko's speech at the Twenty-seventh CPSU Congress, *Pravda*, 3 April 1966.

1502 As reported by Strobe Talbott, *Deadly Gambits* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 113. Kvitsinsky's outburst would be repeated almost verbatim in September 1988 by Institute on Europe deputy director Vladimir Shenaev, who claimed (to the present author) that the United States had 'absolutely no business' in Europe; see above, p. 299, fn. 336.

NATO and a prosperous European Community provided reassurance to its West European members, it gave the Europeans east of the Elbe river reason to believe that Soviet domination and the division of Europe would not last forever. Differentiation and dissent could develop more easily in such conditions. Even today it is difficult to say how much concern there ever was in Moscow about the risks of a direct military clash between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It probably did exist at the height of the Berlin crisis of 1961. Subsequently, however, the Soviet leaders seemed to be more concerned with the military-political backing NATO could provide for ideological and economic challenges, such as utilization of the economic weaknesses and exploitation of the domestic political instabilities in Eastern Europe.

Finally, while the Atlantic alliance, from Moscow's perspective, perhaps served to discourage West Germany from entering upon a separate German nationalist, militarist, or revanchist road, it was time and again to commit itself to a European settlement that would end the division of Germany and Europe.[1503] Although this position, as noted, was not precisely a sincere expression of heart-felt sentiment, it nevertheless did have political consequences and remained a constant irritant to the Soviet leaders for as long as they supported Germany's division.

Since a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals controlled by the Soviet Union was impossible to achieve, NATO remained vigorous and viable and the American military presence could not be eliminated, the Soviet leaders from Stalin to Chernenko pursued second-best solutions, oscillating between various strategies. These included the 'Finlandization' of Europe (aimed at restrictions of autonomy for the Europeans and a high degree of Soviet influence over their internal and external behaviour); 'pan-European' security (which included American participation but still provided for the curtailment and ultimate eradication of US influence); and variations of de Gaulle's *Europe des patries* (emphasis on European state

1503 The most basic NATO commitment, reiterated time and again, was codified in the report on the 'Future Tasks of the Alliance' ('Harmel report'), adopted at the December 1967 NATO ministerial meeting in Brussels. The 'German Question' was defined there as the '*first and foremost [of all] the central political issues in Europe'*. The report also asserted that no lasting settlement in Europe would be possible unless the division of Germany and Europe were overcome; see North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Basic Documents* (Brussels: NATO Information Service, 1981), pp. 103-6 (italics mine).

sovereignty and rejection of the role of 'peripheral powers', which in the Soviet interpretation meant that American soldiers and perhaps even businessmen would go home but that the Soviet Union, as a European power, would remain). Gorbachev's Common European Home concept initially fit the *traditional* approach of attempting to drive wedges between the United States and Western Europe. Between 1986 and 1989, however, specialists at the academic institutes on international affairs and the foreign ministry under Shevardnadze brought about a transformation in attitudes and policy on NATO and the US presence in Europe. The Common House itself was redefined to include the Atlantic dimension.[1504] What were the arguments used by this coalition to gain acceptance for such a comprehensive policy change?

First, in contrast to Gorbachev's initial emphasis on a separate continental European identity, the theoreticians of Atlanticism acknowledged that America 'is part of Europe, historically, in religion, culturally, and politically'.[1505] *Second*, they noted that there were close economic bonds between the USA and Western Europe that neither of the two entities could afford to sever.[1506] One analyst even asserted that 'economically the United States is more a part of Europe than most major European nations'.[1507] *Third*, the links that had evolved in the security sphere were recognized as being of a fundamental nature. Modern weaponry and armed forces, they contended, had narrowed the Atlantic Ocean 'to the size of a Gulf' and made the United States as close to the continent militarily 'as England was at the turn of the century'.[1508] A significant role for the United States in any future system of European security was therefore 'logical and neces-

1504 See above, pp. 299-305.

1505 Sergei Karaganov, 'Amerika v obshcheevropeiskom dome', *Moskovskie novosti*, 13 November 1988 (italics mine).

1506 Ibid.

1507 Yuri Davydov, 'The Soviet Vision of a Common European House', Paper Delivered to the International Studies Conference (ISA) in London, 29 March–1 April 1989 (unpublished), p. 10. The author then was deputy director of the USA and Canada Institute of the Academy of Sciences.

1508 Karaganov, 'Amerika v obshcheevropeiskom dome'. Davydov similarly wrote: 'The nuclear age has drastically shrunk the Atlantic, and now America is as close to Europe in security terms as Great Britain was at the beginning of this century, or even closer'; Davydov, 'The Soviet Vision of a Common European House,' p. 10.

sary'.[1509] *Fourth*, despite all the talk about shifting its attention to Asia and the Pacific, the United States in reality had no plans to quit Europe and lose influence on the continent. If more attention was now being paid to the Asian-Pacific region in Washington, this was not a substitute but a supplement to its involvement in Europe. *Fifth*, even if it were politically desirable to have the United States leave Europe, from a practical point of view it would be 'virtually impossible, even by the concerted efforts of all European nations'.[1510] To drive wedges between the two geopolitical entities could perhaps produce some temporary tactical advantages. But from a strategic vantage point it would be counterproductive. *Sixth*, they argued, the part played by the United States in the system of European security would serve to preserve, in most cases, the salutary influence of European powers on American policy and military strategy. European countries had helped deter Washington from adventurism in international crises, for instance, in the 1973 Middle East war and in Korea, Vietnam and the Taiwan Straits, when American policy makers had 'contemplated the use of nuclear weapons.'[1511] *Seventh*, a withdrawal of US forces from Europe could create insecurity among West European countries disadvantageous to Soviet interests. The Europeans, as a result, might be driven to strengthen their own defense efforts. Military integration in Western Europe could be enhanced. And such integration would most likely not be directed against the United States but would run parallel to US defense efforts and enhance NATO's military potential.[1512] *Eighth*, an American withdrawal

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1509 Karaganov, 'Amerika v obshcheevropeiskom dome'.

1510 Davydov, 'The Soviet Vision of a Common European House', p. 10; similarly Karaganov, 'Amerika v obshcheevropeiskom dome'.

1511 Karaganov, 'Amerika v obshcheevropeiskom dome.' He author restated this argument in November 1988 in Brussels at a conference of the Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and in December of the same year in Bonn-Bad Godesberg, at the Bergedorfer Gesprächskreis, a politically and economically independent forum initiated by industrialist Hans Körber; Bergedorfer Gesprächskreis, ed., *Das gemein-same europäische Haus aus der Sicht der Sowjetunion und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Protocol of the 86th round of talks of the Bergedorfer Gesprächskreis, held in Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 3-4 December 1988 (Hamburg: Körber Stiftung, 1989), p. 78.

1512 Thus Vladimir Baranovsky argued that, in the past, West European military-political integration had proceeded parallel and in tandem with US military efforts in Europe; see his *Zapadnaia Evropa. Voenno-politicheskaia integratsiia* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1988), pp. 180-84. Baranovsky was then head of the West European Department at IMEMO.

could induce European states, acting individually or multilaterally, to produce and deploy nuclear weapons. De Gaulle, in that view, had 'understood before anyone else that, if the Americans were to leave Europe, the French would need nuclear weapons [the *force de frappe*] to balance the colossal economic might of the FRG.'[1513] *Finally*, in extension of the previous point, the US presence had served as a restraint on West German nuclear ambitions. If the Americans were to dismantle their military presence in Europe, Bonn could demand access to or develop its own nuclear weapons.[1514] To summarize, whatever the nuances and the merits of views adopted, the advocates of the New Thinking agreed that the effects of a withdrawal of the United States would be 'destabilizing in security terms'.[1515]

Such perceptions were endorsed by Gorbachev as early as 1986. In talks with West German foreign minister Genscher, he said that he had no wish to undermine NATO: 'We are of the opinion that, given the alliances that have taken shape, it is essential to strengthen those threads whose severance is fraught with the danger of a rupture of the world fabric.'[1516] To Henry Kissinger, in January 1989, he expressed the opinion that the Europeans needed the participation of the USSR and the USA in the 'all-European process'. Stability in Europe was a 'common interest'.[1517] Similarly, during his visit to Bonn, in June 1989, he told his German hosts that the Joint Soviet-German Declaration

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1513 Radomir G. Bogdanov, 'Glavnyi protivnik – inertsiia gonki vooruzhenii', *SShA: Ekonomika, politika, ideologiia*, No. 10 (1988), pp. 62-63. Bogdanov was the deputy head of the Institute on the USA and Canada (and known to be a KGB colonel). His concern about the potentially destabilizing effects of an American troop withdrawal was expressed by him also at the MFA's July 1988 Scientific-Practical Conference; see *Vestnik Ministerstva inostrannykh del SSSR*, No. 15 (August 1988), p. 24.

1514 Bogdanov in conversation with this author, in Moscow, 4 October 1988.

1515 Davydov, 'The Soviet Vision of a Common European House', p. 10; and Karaganov, Bergedorfer Gesprächskreis, 86th session, *Das gemeinsame europäische Haus*, p. 78.

1516 *Soviet News* (London), No. 23 (July 1986).

1517 In talks with former Western political leaders and current members of the Trilateral Commission, including former French president Giscard d'Estaing, Japanese prime minister Nakasone and US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, in January 1989 (in response to a question by Kissinger); *Pravda*, 19 January 1989.

> does not demand that you, or we, should renounce our uniqueness or weaken our allegiance to the alliances. On the contrary, I am confident that maintaining [this allegiance] in our policies will serve to consolidate the contribution of each state to the creation of a peaceful European order as well as to shape a common European outlook.[1518]

In Gorbachev's perceptions, the prospect of German unification enhanced rather than detracted from the importance of the two military alliances. '*Now is not the time to break up the established international political and economic institutions*', he told visiting French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas shortly after the opening of the Berlin wall. 'Let them be transformed, taking into account internal processes, let them find their place in the new situation and work together.'[1519] Similarly, in a briefing for the leaders of the Warsaw Pact on the Soviet-American summit meeting on Malta in December 1989, he stated that the two alliances '*will be preserved for the foreseeable future*' because they could make a 'contribution to strengthening European security' by becoming a bridge between the two parts of Europe.[1520]

It could be argued that the fact that Gorbachev publicly allocated a positive role to the Atlantic alliance in European security affairs – a step unprecedented for a Soviet leader – predetermined Soviet consent to membership of a unified Germany in NATO. There is some validity to this argument. However, the role that he was prepared to grant to both alliances at the end of 1989 and the beginning of 1990 was intimately connected with the 'post-war realities' and the existence of not one but *two German states*. The question to be decided in the spring of 1990 was whether NATO should still be regarded as a stabilizing factor in the changed conditions of German unification, the impending disappearance of the GDR and a crumbling Warsaw Pact. Gorbachev's still thought so but he continued to cling to the notion of two alliances in Europe and avoided as long as possible to commit himself on the issue of Germany's alliance membership. On the latter issue, he was under severe conflicting pressures. The mainstays of the imperial system and the *germanisty* flatly rejected the idea of an extension of NATO to the eastern part of Germany, as did the East Ger-

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1518 'Vizit M. S. Gorbacheva v FRG. Rech' M. S. Gorbacheva', *Pravda*, 13 June 1989.

1519 Bill Keller, 'Gorbachev Urges West to Show Restraint on Turmoil in Eastern Europe', *New York Times*, 15 November 1989 (italics mine).

1520 *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 5 December 1989 (italics mine).

man government until it was replaced in the elections of 18 March. Equally insistently, increasingly in the spring of 1990, he was pressured first by the three Western allies and West Germany, and then also by the new East German government, to allow that extension to occur.

The first major opportunity to set in stone the Soviet position on security matters presented itself in the 26 January *ad hoc* meeting. Gorbachev failed to use this opportunity.[1521] Another possible occasion was the visit by East German prime minister Modrow to Moscow on 30 January. Again the matter was left surrounded by vagueness and indecision. The East German prime minister certainly was committed to German neutrality. This was evident in his four-stage plan from confederation to German unity, which, as cited above, posited 'military neutrality of the GDR and the FRG on the road to federation.'[1522] Modrow confirmed his commitment to this goal at a press conference in East Berlin shortly after his return from Moscow. German unification, he said, was intimately connected with the idea of building a Common European Home. In constructing that new home, he continued, one

> has to proceed from the idea that already in the stage of confederation, both German states will *step by step detach themselves from their obligations of alliance* toward third countries and attain a state of *military neutrality*.[1523]

PDS chief Gysi carried the neutrality ball several yards farther downfield. In accordance with the proceedings at the *ad hoc* meeting, he had been invited to Moscow and on 2 February held talks with Gorbachev, Yakovlev and Falin. In a subsequent interview, Gysi reported that he and Gorbachev had been of one mind on the point that, at the end of any reunification pro-

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1521 See above, pp. 581-84.

1522 Text as published in Modrow, *Aufbruch und Ende*, Appendix 6, pp. 186-88; see *above*, pp. 586-87.

1523 'Hans Modrow unterbreitet Konzept "Für Deutschland, einig Vaterland"', *Neues Deutschland*, 2 February 1990 (italics mine); see above, pp. 586-87. Apparently based on the American memcon of the meeting, Zelikow and Rice (*Germany United*, p. 181) write that Shevardnadze had told Baker on 8 February in Moscow that the requirement that united Germany not only be neutral but also *demilitarized* had not been in the original Modrow plan but had been added in Moscow. Modrow had feared that if he had proposed this additional requirement, it would have spelled the end for him politically. This account is confusing: *neither Modrow's plan nor his explanations of the plan contain the requirement of a disarmed neutral Germany*. It was Gysi who would raise the disarmament issue.

cess, Germany not only had to be neutral but *demilitarized*.[1524] The TASS report on the Gysi-Gorbachev meeting, however, did not contain this requirement. It only recorded that Gorbachev had struck a balance between support for the GDR as a sovereign state and recognition of the momentum towards German unity.[1525] The Soviet leadership, it would appear, was intent on keeping its options open. In fact, there was ambiguity about what had actually been agreed upon between Gorbachev and Gysi, and between the Soviet leader and the East German prime minister. Gorbachev, by supporting the Modrow plan, appeared to have bound himself to the goal of neutralization. However, both he – and again the Soviet media – subsequently failed to confirm this. Furthermore, no sooner had Gysi added the disarmament requirement that Modrow backed away from German neutrality altogether. At the World Economic Forum in Davos as well as in interviews with German and foreign journalists he said that he had not meant the neutralization of Germany to be a precondition for unity but simply an *'idea for dialogue'*.[1526]

The ambiguities persisted in Baker's meetings with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze on 8-9 February. The Soviet foreign minister did not push the idea of neutralization, telling his American counterpart only that Moscow had once supported the idea of a unified Germany, but of a neutral unified country, and that a united Germany could not be adapted to the alliances as they now existed. In the same way as he had previously worried about the possible rise of right-wing and neo-Nazi forces, he was now anxious about the danger of a militarized Germany.[1527]

1524 Gysi interview with *Washington Post*, 4 February 1990; see also the report in the PDS newspaper, 'Nicht nur Neutralität, sondern Demilitarisierung,' *Neues Deutschland*, 5 February 1990.

1525 'Beseda v TsK KPSS', *Pravda*, 5 February 1990.

1526 'Modrow: Vorschläge sind ein Angebot zum Dialog', *Neues Deutschland*, 5 February 1990. Yet he did not completely abandon his idea. Thus, he pointed to international responses which had supported it. He also stated that Oskar Lafontaine, the prime minister of the Saarland and potential SPD candidate for chancellor, had called his proposal worthy of consideration.

1527 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 180. In his memoirs, Baker fails to report Shevardnadze's views on the issues of German neutralization and demilitarization; *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 202-5.

Gorbachev, in his talks with Baker, was less concerned about such dangers than his foreign minister:

> Basically, I share the direction of your thinking [on the favourable possibilities of Soviet-American cooperation to preserve peace]. The process is under way. We have to adjust to this process. We have to adjust to this new reality and not be passive in ensuring that stability in Europe is not upset. Well, for us and for you, regardless of the differences, there is nothing terrifying in the prospect of a unified Germany ... For France and for Britain, the question is who is going to be the major player in Europe. We have it easier. *We are big countries and have our own weight*.[1528]

Nevertheless, he saw advantages to having American troops in Germany (and Europe): 'We don't really want to see a replay of Versailles, where the Germans were able to arm themselves. ... The best way to constrain that process is to ensure that Germany is contained within European structures.'[1529]

Earlier in the conversation, Baker had assured Gorbachev that, if Germany were to remain part of NATO, '*there would be no extension of NATO's jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east*.'[1530] That terse statement was to play an important part several years later in Moscow's vehement Russian opposition to the eastward enlargement of NATO to embrace former member countries of the Warsaw Pact and ex-republics of the Soviet Union (e.g. the Baltic States). It is exhibit number one in the Kremlin's prosecution of the case against NATO enlargement to the effect that, in 1990, Western leaders had given 'clear commitments', 'firm guarantees' and 'categorical assurances' that such a step was ruled out. The case is exceedingly weak.[1531] The Kremlin, evidently deliberately, is confusing the issue. As Jack Matlock, the United States ambassador in Moscow and privy to the Baker-Gorbachev and Baker-Shevardnadze talks has stated: 'All the discussions in 1990 regarding the expansion of NATO

1528 Ibid., p. 205 (italics mine).
1529 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 184.
1530 Ibid., p. 182 (italics mine).
1531 The claim that Western leaders had made solid pledges that Nato would not expand eastwards, *including beyond the territory of the former GDR*, are a myth – one, however, that continues to be difficult to dispel, no matter how much evidence may be adduced in refutation. Given the political importance of the myth, the issue will be explored in detail below, pp. 645-59.

jurisdiction were in the context of what would happen to the *territory of the GDR*.' [1532]

What about other Western leaders? Did any of them give Gorbachev guarantees or assurances that there would be no NATO enlargement beyond the former GDR? Foreign minister Genscher's speech ten days prior to the Baker talks in Moscow can be taken to be a commitment of sorts. On 31 January, in a speech in Tutzing near Munich, he said:

> NATO should unambiguously declare: Whatever may happen in the Warsaw Pact, an *expansion of the territory of NATO to the east, that is, closer to the borders of the Soviet Union, will not occur.* Such a security guarantee is of importance for the Soviet Union and its behavior. The West must also act upon the understanding that the changes in Eastern Europe and the German unification process should not be allowed to lead to an impairment of Soviet security interests. It will require a high degree of statecraft by European [leaders] to create the conditions necessary for this [state of affairs].[1533]

But what did he mean? First and foremost, his statement applied to the GDR. This is indicated by his clarification that 'the integration of *that part of Germany, that today forms the GDR, into the military structures of NATO* … would block the German-German rapprochement'.[1534] This formulation contained at its core the idea that Germany would continue to be a member of NATO (so, technically, there would be no 'enlargement') but a special status (*Sonderstatus*) would be designed for the former GDR territory. This was precisely the formula to which Genscher agreed during his visit in Washington on 2 February so as to coordinate positions prior to the talks of American and German leaders in Moscow, that is, that of Baker on 8-9 February and that of Kohl and Genscher 10 February.

Genscher, however, *did* adhere to the idea that the Soviet Union should receive some assurance that NATO would not expand east of the borders of the GDR. This is evident in his talks with British foreign minister Douglas Hurd on 6 February and with Shevardnadze in Moscow on 10 Febru-

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1532 Jack Matlock, 'Nato Expansion: Was there a Promise?', *Jackmatlock.com*, 3.4.2014, http://jackmatlock.com/2014/04/nato-expansion-was-there-a-promise/ (italics mine).

1533 'Rede des Bundesministers Genscher anlässlich der Tagung der Evangelischen Akademie Tutzing, "Zur deutschen Einheit im europäischen Rahmen", 31. Januar 1990', in Der Bundesminister des Auswärtigen informiert, Mitteilung für die Presse, No. 1026/90 (italics mine). *Ausdehnung* is the term Genscher used for expansion or enlargement.

1534 Ibid.

ary. 'The Russians, he told Hurd, should receive some assurance that, when for instance the Polish government some day were to leave the Warsaw Pact, it could then not join NATO.'[1535] To Shevardnadze he acknowledged: 'We are conscious of the fact that the adherence of united Germany to NATO raises complicated questions. For us, however, it is clear: NATO will not expand eastward.'[1536] Abandoning the agreed-upon position with the United States, Genscher stated: 'Concerning, incidentally, [the issue of] non-expansion of NATO, *that [principle] applies in general [that is, beyond the territory of the former GDR]*.'[1537] Genscher thereby expressed a point of view. He stated his personal opinion. He by no means provided his Soviet counterpart with a 'guarantee', which in any case he was not authorized to give, neither by the chancellor nor by any of the other top Western leaders or NATO.

To return to Baker's talks with the Soviet leadership, the U.S. Secretary of State asked Gorbachev whether he would rather see an independent Germany outside of NATO, with no US forces on German soil, or a united Germany tied to NATO but with assurances 'that there would be no extension of NATO's current jurisdiction eastward'. Gorbachev replied that he was still giving thought to these options. 'Soon we are going to have a seminar [a discussion] among our political leadership to talk about all of these options.' One thing was clear, however: *'Any extension of the zone of NATO is unacceptable*.' It did not help clarity at that point in time that Baker replied: '*I agree.*'[1538] The fog that would surround the Western position thickened when Baker remarked at a press conference after his talks with the Soviet leaders to the effect that the United States favoured a uni-

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1535 Mr. Hurd to Sir C. Mallaby (Bonn), No. 85 Telegraphic (WRL o2/1], Confidential, FCO, 6 February 1990, From Private Secretary to Secretary of State's call to Genscher: German Unification, in Patrick Salmon, Keith Hamilton and Stephen Twigge, eds., *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, *Series 3, Vol. 7, German Unification 1989-1990* (London/New York 2010), p. 262.

1536 Internal German foreign ministry memo about the Genscher-Shevardnadze talks, quoted by Uwe Klußmann, Matthias Schepp and Klaus Wiegrefe, 'Absurde Vorstellung', *Der Spiegel*, 48/2009, http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-67871653.html.

1537 Ibid. (italics mine).

1538 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 183. Jack Matlock, who was present at the meeting and took his own notes, has confirmed the accuracy of this crucial exchange in conversation with this author on 10 February 1997 in Cambridge, Mass.

fied Germany's 'continued membership in, *or association with*, NATO'.[1539]

Whatever the contortions of the Western leaders in private and in conversation with their Soviet counterparts, no 'firm guarantee' was given andthe issue of NATO enlargement or expansion east of the Oder-Neisse was never made the subject of negotiation. The issue cropped up here and there in internal Western discussion. For instance, Baker, in conversation with Genscher, thought it possible that in the foreseeable future 'Central European states [could] join NATO' to which the German foreign minister firmly replied that 'we should at present not touch' this issue. Equally readily, the US Secretary of State agreed.[1540]

As for the Soviet leaders, they fluctuated in their position between a non-committal attitude (Shevardnadze) and complete rejection of the idea of united Germany's membership in NATO (Gorbachev). The Soviet foreign minister, at a press conference held immediately prior to the talks with Kohl and Genscher, stated:

> The idea of neutrality is not new. It is a good, fine idea. It was proposed right after the war ... [We] were always for a united German nation and one German people but for a neutral, demilitarized Germany. This was our main principle. *What is our future position on this issue? Well, today Kohl and Genscher are meeting with Gorbachev. We will try to discuss these issues* that are currently very acute both for Europe and the two German states, and I guess for the rest of the world.[1541]

Gorbachev, as noted above, in his meeting with the German chancellor, was more categorical. He said that he knew that neutrality was not only unacceptable to him (Kohl) but that it was humiliating to the German people.[1542] Nevertheless, he envisaged a unified Germany *outside* the alliances, with national armed forces adequate for national defense. He

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1539 Thomas L. Friedman, 'Gorbachev Accepts Deep Cuts in Europe', *New York Times*, 10 February 1990 (italics mine).

1540 Internal memo by Frank Elbe, the German foreign ministry's political director Vermerk des Leiters des Ministerialbüros, Elbe, vom 26. März 1990 über das Gespräch von Bundesaußenminister Genscher mit US-Außenminister Baker am 21. März in Windhoek, in Andreas Hilger, ed., *Diplomatie für die deutsche Einheit. Dokumente des Auswärtigen Amts zu den deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen 1989/90* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011), p. 113.

1541 Excerpts from the press conference as published in *Pravda*, 11 February 1990 (italics mine).

1542 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 273; see p. 594.

could not take seriously the idea that one part of Germany should be in NATO and the other in the Warsaw Pact. He also rejected Baker's proposal, according to which a unified Germany should belong to NATO with a special status for the territory of the former GDR.[1543]

To review the state of affairs as of mid-February 1990, both the Western and the Soviet position on Germany's future security status was only beginning to take shape. Ambiguity surrounded both positions, although to a lesser degree in the West than in the Soviet Union. The definite Western preference for a unified Germany's alliance membership was muddied by what exactly was meant by the formula of no extension of the 'zone' of NATO or NATO's 'jurisdiction'. However, the ambiguities in the joint and all-important West German-American position dissipated very quickly. On 24 February, at a meeting at Camp David, Bush and Kohl agreed that

> a unified Germany should remain a full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, including participation in its military structure. We agreed that US military forces should remain stationed in the united Germany and elsewhere in Europe as a continuing guarantor of stability. The Chancellor and I are also in agreement that in a unified state, the former territory of the GDR should have a special military status [that] would take into account the legitimate security interests of all interested countries, including those of the Soviet Union.[1544]

Gorbachev was torn more fundamentally between various positions and refused to commit himself to any of them, essentially until the talks with Kohl in Moscow in July 1990. On the one hand, he recognized the dangers of Versailles (not only because the treaty had been unable to forestall German rearmament but also because it had encouraged a nationalist backlash in Germany) but on the other, he emphasized the necessity of Four Power cooperation and firm guarantees to be provided within that framework. In accordance with the New Political Thinking, he allocated important security functions to the Atlantic alliance and American forces in Europe but he opposed the logical extension of this framework to include unified Ger-

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1543 Ibid.

1544 Joint Bush-Kohl press conference; excerpts as quoted by Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 216**.** Notwithstanding ambiguities in the internal West German government discussion (notably hesitations and modifications by Genscher and the foreign ministry) and vacillation by Britain and France, the joint Bush-Kohl position remained firm. Since the *Soviet* (Gorbachev's) consent to unified Germany's membership in NATO is at issue here, the differentiations in the Western position will not be pursued.

many's membership in NATO. The principle of the Freedom of Choice implied letting the Germans and the East Europeans decide the question of what alliance they wanted to belong to, but he sought to place constraints on the application of this principle. For several months, however, it seemed as if the ambiguities had been resolved in Moscow in favour of retrenchment and a hardening of positions on both the internal and external aspects of German unification. The forms, circumstances, and rationales of that apparent reversal need to be explored in some detail.

Soviet Retrenchment

The turn to a more uncompromising stance became evident immediately after the Open Skies foreign ministers' conference in Ottawa. In what can be regarded as having clearly been related to the upcoming Two Plus Four negotiations formally agreed upon at the conference, Gorbachev warned that Moscow would resist Western efforts to dictate the proceedings: 'We rule out such a method', he said in an interview with *Pravda* published on 21 February, 'whereby three or four [countries] first come to an arrangement between themselves and then set out their already agreed-upon position before the participants. This is unacceptable.'[1545] On the form which an agreement should take, he still − or again − thought that there should be a peace treaty. On substance, the treaty should provide for a role of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and he called any change in the military-strategic balance between the two alliances 'impermissible'.[1546]

More intransigent inflections on the German security issue also surfaced in the foreign ministry. Shevardnadze formed a working group, chaired by Deputy Minister Anatoli Adamishin and department head Bondarenko, to deal with the German problem and the Two Plus Four negotiations, and on 24 February assembled the MFA's Collegium, including the deputy foreign ministers and fourteen other officials, ostensibly to drive firm stakes into the international negotiation ground. The Collegium derided the 'prescriptions advanced in some Western countries' and specifically the idea that NATO membership of a unified Germany in NATO would be in the Soviet interest. It was unacceptable to the Soviet Union

1545 'Otvety M.S. Gorbacheva na voprosy korrespondenta "Pravdy"', *Pravda*, 21 February 1990.

1546 Ibid.

that anyone but she herself should seek to determine what constituted the essence of Soviet security and how best to safeguard it. The USSR had its own notions as to how to do this and 'certainly, any variants envisaging the membership of unified Germany in NATO do not correspond to such notions'.[1547]

As for the hardening of the Soviet position on the internal issues of German unification, Gorbachev ostensibly reconsidered the position he had adopted when he had handed the key to German unity to Kohl and told him that unification was the prerogative of the Germans themselves. In the *Pravda* interview, Gorbachev rejected not only any attempt by three or four of the Six to confront the remaining Two with an agreed-upon position but he also objected to a procedure whereby 'the Germans agree among themselves and then propose to the others only to endorse the decisions already adopted by them'.[1548] Similarly, on 6 March, at the second and last of Modrow's visits to Moscow, he again eschewed the terms 'German unity' and 'unification', asserting instead that it was 'by no means a matter of indifference how the rapprochement (*sblizhenie*) of the two German states takes place' and expressed his firm conviction that the 'fanning of speculation, the tendency to annex the GDR and policies designed to create *faits accomplis* do not correspond to a responsible approach to a solution of a problem as sensitive to the fate of Europe and the world as the German question'.[1549] In other words, article 23 of the Federal Republic's constitution as the point of departure for unification was definitely out of the question. Although he did not use the word *Anschluss*, it was clear that this is what he meant that had to be precluded.

This apparently firm stance, however, as so many others previously, was severely undercut by the course of events. The parliamentary elections in East Germany on 18 March produced a stunning victory for the conservative parties, which polled 48 percent of the vote. The SPD, which had been regarded as the front-runner, received only 22 percent, and the

1547 'V MID SSSR. Rassmotren shirokii krug voprosov', *Pravda*, 26 February 1990.
1548 Interview in *Pravda*, 21 February 1990.
1549 'Vstrecha M.S. Gorbacheva s pravitel'stvennoi delegatsii GDR,' *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 7 March 1990. Gorbachev's emphasis on *sblizhenie* had been apparent earlier, in his telephone conversation with Modrow on 12 February, 'Zapis' osnovnogo soderzhaniia telefonnogo razgovora M.S. Gorbacheva s Predsedatelem Soveta Ministrov GDR Kh. Modrovom, 12 fevralia 1990 goda,' Hoover Institution Archives, box 3, Zelikow-Rice Project on German Unification.

PDS 16 percent. The most disastrous performance was that of the Alliance 90, the umbrella party for groups like the Neue Forum that had been in the forefront of the democratic revolution of the preceding year; it garnered less than 3 percent of the vote. It was a foregone conclusion that the new government under Prime Minister Lothar de Maizière (CDU) would not support anything but Kohl's preference for unification under article 23.

Concerning the external aspects, Gorbachev now dispelled Western hopes to the effect that his and Shevardnadze's failure to demand a neutral status for unified Germany had presaged Soviet consent to NATO membership. In reference to the talks between Gorbachev and Modrow, TASS reported that

> It was stated with full determination [at the talks] that *the inclusion of a future Germany in NATO is inadmissible and will not take place, whatever arguments may be used*. One cannot allow the breakdown of the balance [of power] in Europe, the basis of stability and security, and of mutual trust and cooperation.[1550]

On the face of it, this settled the question: unified Germany's membership in NATO was unacceptable. Other solutions had to be found.

It is not the purpose of this book to reconstruct in detail the tactical twists and turns adopted by the Soviet negotiators in the Two Plus Four talks at both the foreign ministers' level and that of the ministries' political directors. The protracted talks, extending from a preliminary meeting on 14 March in Berlin and the first ordinary meeting on 5 May in Bonn to the final meeting on 12 September in Moscow, have been described elsewhere.[1551] They were characterized on the Soviet side by an erratic but in essence uncompromising treatment of the issue both in and at the sidelines of the Two Plus Four negotiations and the return in rapid succession to several of the positions advanced previously, including ideas such as

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1550 'Vstrecha M.S. Gorbacheva s pravitel'stvennoi delegatsii GDR', *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 7 March 1990.

1551 The best account here is that of Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 246-63; see also the account by the West German political director in the talks, Frank Elbe, *Die Lösung der äußeren Aspekte der deutschen Frage* (Bonn: Europa Union Verlag, 1993) and, with Richard Kiessler, *Ein runder Tisch mit scharfen Ecken: Der diplomatische Weg zur deutschen Einheit* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1993); other sources for the arduous negotiations are the memoirs by Shevardnadze, Baker, and Genscher.

– the settlement of the German problem by a peace treaty;
– until the conclusion of a peace treaty, the continued presence of the armed forces of the Four Powers in Berlin;
– the military-political status of Germany to be a non-aligned, neutral state, partially demilitaried;
– the unification process to be synchronized with the creation of new security structures in Europe providing, above all, for the transformation of the military alliances and a new and enhanced role to be allocated to the CSCE;
– membership of both unified Germany and the Soviet Union in NATO;
– and dual membership of Germany in both alliances.

Everything on that menu, as Shevardnadze knew well from his talks, was abhorrent to the taste of the two conservative-ruled Germanys and their NATO allies, notably the United States. Nevertheless, the various indigestible dishes suggested on the menu continued to be included in the proceedings and position papers at closed internal meetings and advertised in public statements, the talks with Western officials and the Two Plus Four negotiations.

The stubbornness with which the Soviet negotiators stuck to hard-line and essentially unrealistic positions had much to do with internal pressure. One major example are the Politburo's instructions (*direktivy*) for Shevardnadze for his upcoming talks with Bush and Baker in Washington on 4-6 April. The directives were issued on 2 April in the form of Politburo approval for a draft that had been prepared a few days earlier and sponsored by Shevardnadze, Defense Minister Yazov, KGB chief Kryuchkov, PB foreign policy *kurator* Yakovlev, CC secretary for the military industry Oleg Baklanov, and Deputy Prime Minister Igor Belousov.[1552] As for the internal aspects of German unification and their linkage to international security affairs, Shevardnadze was instructed to emphasize to Bush and Baker

> the necessity of ensuring the stage-by-stage unification of the two German states and its synchronization with the all-European process. It is important to

1552 'Vypuska iz protokolia No. 184 zasedaniia Politburo TsK KPSS ot 2 aprelia 1990 goda. O direktivakh dlia peregovorov Ministra inostrannykh del SSSR s Presidentom SShA Dzh. Bushem i Gosudarstvennym sekretarem Dzh. Beikerom (Vashington, 4-6 aprelia 1990 goda).' The document is stored in the Russian TsKhSD archives; a copy is available in the archives of the Hoover Institution.

> prevent the movement toward unity from acquiring uncontrolled forms and speed which would put the Four Powers, Germany's neighbours, and Europe as a whole in a position of [having to] face accomplished facts and seriously hamper the search for mutually acceptable decisions on the external aspects of the building of German unity. *The unification process should take place not in the form of an* Anschluss *of the GDR but should be the result of agreements between the two German states as equal subjects of international law*. We should emphasize that, naturally, we favor the existence of the GDR as an independent state for as long as possible.

Perhaps needless to repeat, by the time these restrictive directives were issued, the train of article 23 had already departed from the stations in both Bonn and East Berlin.

As for the external aspects, the directives stated:

> We should emphasize that the most appropriate form of a German settlement would be a peace treaty that would draw the line under the past war and determine the military-political status of Germany. It should have as its necessary elements the partial demilitarization and the establishment of a reasonable sufficiency (*razumnaia dostatochnost'*) for the armed forces. ... If Baker were to react negatively to the idea of a peace treaty, we should inquire about his vision of the forms for a peace settlement with Germany.

Until the creation of new European security structures, the directives continued, the rights and responsibilities of the Four should be preserved to the full extent. Furthermore, *'We should firmly state our negative attitude to the participation of the new Germany in NATO. Germany could become a non-aligned state, preserving [only] its EC membership.'*[1553]

The record does not indicate whether the PB's approval was preceded by much or any discussion.[1554] At the beginning of May, however, a 'tough' (*zhestkii*) discussion of the German problem at Politburo level did take place.[1555] Shevardnadze, assisted by Tarasenko, had prepared a position paper which, following by then well established practice, was redrafted and turned in a more uncompromising direction by Bondarenko's Third Department. The paper was to serve as a point of reference for his upcoming participation in the first round of the Two Plus Four negotia-

1553 Ibid. (italics mine).

1554 Chernayev has stated that only one PB session dealt with the German problem, the one at the beginning of May. Tarasenko speaks of two PB meetings, referring perhaps – in addition to the one in May – to the meeting of 2 April; interviews with Chernyaev and Tarasenko.

1555 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 347.

tions in Bonn. It was co-sponsored by Shevardnadze, Yakovlev, Yazov, and Kryuchkov but was apparently still not tough enough to satisfy the more conservative PB members, including Ligachev, who severely criticized it. Furthermore, with the exception of Shevardnadze, the sponsors of the new directives remained silent. Gorbachev sided with the conservative majority faction. He burst out heatedly at one point, stating categorically: '*We will not let Germany into NATO, and that is the end of it. I will even risk the collapse of the [CFE] negotiations in Vienna and START but will not allow this*.'[1556] The position paper, as a result, essentially was no different from the directives that the PB had endorsed one month earlier.

Chernyaev, who had not been asked for his opinion at the PB meeting, sent a note to Gorbachev on the following day, reflecting both on the decision-making process in the Politburo and the Soviet negotiating position on the German problem. He deplored the fact that, although many PB members lacked any expertise on that problem, they were nevertheless allowed to discuss it. As a result, positions were formed under the influence of Ligachev and his dire warnings about NATO approaching the borders of the Soviet Union. Such warnings, he told Gorbachev, were nonsense. They reflected 1945 thinking and pseudo-patriotism of the masses. 'Germany will remain in NATO in any case,' he predicted, 'and we will again try to catch up with a train that has left the station. Instead of putting forward specific and firm terms for our consent, we are heading toward a failure.'[1557] To Chernyaev, at least, the consequences of the Soviet failure to present terms in accordance with Soviet interests and acceptable to the West were immediately obvious. The telegrams that Shevardnadze sent from Bonn and his report on the Two Plus Four meeting after his return to Moscow indicated that he had been forced to evade the issues by taking recourse to 'general phraseology' and that 'we lost' another round in the diplomatic game.[1558]

How, then, is the hardening of the Soviet position to be explained? One interpretation has been advanced by Tarasenko, Shevardnadze's personal assistant. He has argued that the foreign minister was 'from the very beginning [the talks with Kohl and Genscher on 10 February] to the end [Gorbachev's formal consent in July] committed to the idea of German membership in NATO' and that the crucial task he saw was 'how to man-

1556 Ibid. (italics mine).
1557 Ibid., p. 348.
1558 Ibid.

age the problem domestically.'[1559] This interpretation is reflected in Shevardnadze's own account. 'Politics is the art of the possible', he wrote.

> We may like it or not, but it is an axiom that has no need of proof. In the real world of politics we could not escape the need for a constant and scrupulous reading of the changing political context. But the *internal situation of the Soviet Union was the crucial factor*. Our position had to coincide with the will of our people.[1560]

Although the importance of domestic constraints is undeniable, it was not one emanating from 'the people' but from entrenched bureaucratic interests. In any case, however, Shevardnadze's portrayal as his having consistently adhered to the view of unified Germany in NATO as the best bargain for the Soviet Union and of his striving for public endorsement of this solution is not very credible. The most simple and, to a large extent, plausible explanation for the hardening of his stance lies in the time-honoured diplomatic practice to construct a tough, even maximalist, position at the outset of negotiations and settle for a 'compromise' solution that more or less reflects what one thought possible to achieve. Furthermore, it is questionable whether Shevardnadze, from the very beginning of the negotiation process, did have a firm view not only of what was possible but also of what was desirable. As for Gorbachev and his attitudes on the NATO issue, no claim of constancy and foresight has been advanced either by him or by his supporters. Gorbachev may have been conscious of the disadvantages of a neutral status for a unified Germany, but (as evident in the PB meeting of early May) he was genuinely and adamantly opposed to Germany's exclusive membership in the Atlantic alliance. He was wedded instead to an idea that would seemingly permit safe passage for the Soviet ship of state between the Scylla of German neutrality (and a possible renationalization of German security policies) and the Charybdis of the GDR's full integration in NATO, namely: *dual membership* of unified Germany in NATO and the Warsaw Pact. As absurd as this idea may appear in retrospect, he tenaciously clung to it for several months, encouraged perhaps by the support it received from experts in the academic institutes on international relations.[1561] In a variation on this idea, one of the possibili-

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1559 Interview with Tarasenko.

1560 Shevardnadze, *My vybor*, p. 238 (italics mine).

1561 Sergei Karaganov of the Institute on Europe, for instance, asserted that dual membership of Germany in both alliances was not such a strange idea. The United States was not only a member of NATO but also of ANZUS, and previ-

ties he contemplated was that if a unified Germany joined NATO, the Soviet Union should be invited to join NATO as well.[1562] Gorbachev's stance, in turn, provides another clue to Shevardnadze's tactical procedure. It undercut the degree of flexibility that the foreign minister may have been prepared to show at the negotiating table. But he was also in all likelihood not prepared openly to challenge Gorbachev on a position that was supported by the pillars of Soviet power and within his own ministry.

A second interpretation of the reasons why the Soviet position hardened in the spring of 1990 is connected with the by now familiar conservative charge of ineptitude and lack of professionalism. Akhromeev and Kornienko, for instance, contend that, prior to the Camp David agreement between Bush and Kohl on 24 February, the Western leaders had not excluded the possibility of a modified or partial membership of a unified Germany in NATO, notably its not entering into the military structure of the alliance, and that 'it was only in March, that is, after the NATO train had left the station, that we started to put forward the unacceptability of German inclusion in NATO' and to argue that such a step 'would lead to the breakdown of the balance of power in Europe'.[1563] Only then, on 14 March, did the Soviet foreign ministry issue an official statement that more or less clearly outlined a Soviet concept on German unification. 'But it was too late', they charge,

> especially since the elections in East Germany on 18 March had produced a new government headed by [Christian Democrat] de Maizière and the negotiations on German affairs, which were held under the Two Plus Four formula, very quickly turned into a formula of Five Minus One, that is, the USSR became a pariah at these negotiations. Our improvisations to 'neutralize Germany' (which was, of course, unrealistic) or to have it enter both alliances, NATO and the Warsaw Pact (which was even more unrealistic, especially under the circumstances where the days of the Warsaw Pact were numbered), of course did not help.

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ously of SEATO and CENTO; in conversation with this author in Moscow on 5 May 1990.

1562 Shevardnadze, too, had advanced this proposal; see Thomas L. Friedman, 'Soviets Promise to Pull Back Some Tactical Nuclear Arms', *New York Times*, 6 June 1990.

1563 *Pravda*, 7 March 1990, as quoted by Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata*, p. 260. Their reference is presumably to the TASS statement on the talks between Gorbachev and Modrow on 6 March; see above, fn. 1388.

As a result of these ill-advised improvisations, the conservative critics conclude, it was not at all surprising that Gorbachev and Shevardnadze changed course yet again and, 'at the time of the July visit of Chancellor Kohl to the USSR, officially removed all Soviet objections to German membership in NATO'.[1564] Irrespective of whether one agrees with the allegation that the Final Agreement constituted a violation of Soviet (and Russian) security interests, the conservative criticism of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze is well founded at least in one respect. A good case can be made for the argument that, at the time when Gorbachev handed the key to German unification to Kohl and consented to letting the Germans decide on the form and speed of that process, he and Shevardnadze had *not* thought through the practical consequences of that blanket authorization, notably the implications of unification on the basis of article 23 of the West German constitution. Accession of East Germany according to the constitution would mean that West Germany's network of treaties, including the Final Act of 1954 that provided for the Federal Republic's membership in NATO, would automatically be extended to the eastern part of the enlarged Germany and thus would prejudge the outcome of what was ostensibly in the purview of the Two Plus Four negotiations. It would seem that on 6 March Modrow and his government delegation had successfully impressed upon Gorbachev, from their perspective, the negative implications of article 23.

A third interpretation sees the hardening of the Soviet position as a result, at least in part, of a reassertion of the interests of the Soviet armed forces on the German issue. Scrutiny of role of the armed forces in decision-making on Germany's membership in NATO confirms the enervation of their influence on overall Soviet international security affairs. As described in the previous chapter, this assessment runs counter to general patterns of behaviour of the mainstays of imperial power throughout world history. Given the trends toward the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the inclusion of unified Germany in NATO, one should have expected a determined effort by the armed forces in conjunction with and blessing of hard-line factions of the party to forestall both. Such an effort, however, was not made. A more thorough analysis of this phenomenon, drawing on the earlier discussion of military and party influence on policy-making in the Gorbachev era, is appropriate.

1564 Ibid.

Military and Party Opposition

Expressions of dissatisfaction with the political leadership's handling of international security matters by military officers in the crucial period between February and July 1990 can certainly be found. In that period, the military's position on the central question of the possible inclusion of unified Germany in NATO seemed to be consistent. As expressed by General Staff department head Col. Gen. Nikolai Chervov as late as July 1990, such a step would 'definitely be unacceptable, both politically and psychologically, to the Soviet people. It would seriously upset the military balance of strength that has developed in Europe'.[1565] Furthermore, as Mikhail Moiseev, the chief of general staff, had warned several months earlier, any Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe, including from East Germany, had to be matched by Western, foremost American pull-backs. The Soviet Union, he told French journalists in early February, was ready 'to withdraw its forces from the GDR completely *if* those of the United States, Britain, and France were withdrawn from the FRG'.[1566] His position remained unchanged as late as July 1990. He bluntly told German visitors that Soviet soldiers would remain in Germany 'as long as there are American troops in the Federal Republic'.[1567] Similarly, with impeccable military logic Lt. Gen. Igor Sergeev, deputy chief of the strategic rocket forces, told the weekly *Moskovskie novosti* that a mass pullout from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary would upset strategic parity with NATO and overturn Soviet military calculations:

> We will lose ground and be that much closer to danger. If someone loses in parity, then someone else naturally gains. Forthcoming changes in the Warsaw Pact of course mean losses for us from the military standpoint. All the theoretical discussions about changing from a military to a political pact are cold comfort. It is playing with words.[1568]

Even more strident criticism of the allegedly disastrous drift of Soviet security policies was expressed by military officers at the Congress of Peo-

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1565 Col. Gen. Nikolai Chervov, 'United Germany Should Not Be NATO Member', *Svenska Dagbladet* (Stockholm), 1 July 1990, quoted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, Soviet Union, FBIS-SOV-90-129, pp. 4-5.

1566 'UdSSR bereit zu sofortigem Truppenabzug aus der DDR', *Neues Deutschland*, 5 February 1990 (italics mine).

1567 *Der Spiegel*, 16 July 1990, p. 27.

1568 *Moskovskie novosti*, 21 February 1990.

ple's Deputies and the founding congress of the Russian Communist Party, which took place from 19 to 23 June and the Twenty-eighth Party Congress, held from 2 to 13 July. Its exponents were Albert Makashov, commander of the Volga-Urals Military District; Colonels Viktor Alksnis and Nikolai Petrushenko; Generals Alexei Lizichev, head of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army and Navy; Nikolai Boiko, his counterpart in the Air Defense Forces; Ivan Mikulin, chief of the Southern Group of Forces' Political Directorate; and Admiral Gennadi Khvatov, commander of the Pacific Fleet.

Gen. Makashov's diatribes were particularly scathing and insulting to the political leadership. Warning of the dangers inherent in the impending incorporation of a unified Germany into NATO and the emergence of a powerful Japan in the Far East, he charged sarcastically that 'only our learned peacocks are crowing that no one is going to attack us.'[1569] The strange birds he figuratively referred to were obviously the academic specialists who had been elevated by the political leadership to a preeminent role in international security decision-making. Reinforcing his sarcastic comment, he fumed that the president ought to meet 'not only with the intelligentsia and owners of cooperatives but also with the defenders of the state'. Obviously contemptuous of Gorbachev for his lack of military experience and expertise, he suggested that military service should be made mandatory for future presidents and that newly elected leaders should undergo three months of training at the General Staff Academy. On foreign policy and the loss of empire in Eastern Europe, and in obvious criticism of Shevardnadze and by implication again of Gorbachev, he deplored that, 'because of the so-called victories of our diplomacy, the Soviet army is being driven without a fight out of countries that our fathers liberated from fascism'. Furthermore, he pointedly asked why NATO was continuing to strengthen despite the erosion of the Warsaw Pact. He even went as far as claiming that 'the realities of the world today are such that continuing unilateral disarmament would be an act of stupidity, or a crime'.[1570]

1569 *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 21 June 1990. This account of the military's criticism of the political leadership on defense and international security issues follows Stephen Foye, 'Military Hard-Liner Condemns "New Thinking" in Security Policy', *Report on the USSR* (Radio Liberty, Munich), Vol. 2, No. 28, 13 July 1990, pp. 4-6.

1570 Ibid.

Some of that criticism, albeit less ominous and vitriolic, was in evidence also at the Twenty-eighth CPSU Congress. At the outset of the congress, the chances of a full-fledged political battle developing over international security issues seemed high. Not only was the military establishment represented by a contingent of 269 delegates, but a high percentage of those officers were drawn from the conservative High Command. Furthermore, evidence gathered at a series of military party conferences that preceded the congress indicated that the military leadership had manipulated the selection of delegates to ensure a predominantly conservative slate.[1571] The most disparaging comments were voiced during a stormy meeting of the working group on international affairs on 5 July. At that meeting, Mikulin laid the blame for the impending ouster of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe to the New Thinking and its architects. He also charged that the idea that the Common European Home would eliminate the opposing military blocs was simply a 'myth'.[1572] Admiral Khvatov summed up the allegedly dire security position that the New Thinking (rather than pre-Gorbachev imperial policies) had produced: 'We have no allies in the West. We have no allies in the East. Consequently, we are back to where we were in 1939.'[1573]

There is little doubt that such sentiments were widely shared in the military officers' corps. The imminent inclusion of unified Germany in NATO, the unilateral reduction of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe and large asymmetrical cuts in CFE were, after all, merely some more milestones marking the sharp decline of military factors in Soviet foreign policy and the emasculation of the military's influence in decision-making. To that

1571 Stephen Foye, 'Defense Issues at the Party Congress', *Report on the USSR* (Radio Liberty, Munich), Vol. 2, No. 30 (July 1990), pp. 1-4, and *id*., 'The Soviet Armed Forces: Lead-Up to the Party Congress,' *Report on the USSR* (Radio Liberty, Munich), Vol. 2, No. 28 (July 1990), pp. 1-4.

1572 Foye, 'Defense Issues at the Party Congress', p. 2; Paul Quinn-Judge, 'Military Assails Concessions to West, Arms Cuts', *Boston Globe*, July 6, 1990. The intended targets of the military criticism did not fail to respond. Shevardnadze, for instance, stated: 'I was told that some comrades said at the section's session that the idea of a Common European Home is an illusion or a myth. Thinking like that means failing to notice what is going on around us and closing one's eyes to the facts'; 'Otvety na voprosy uchastnikov s"ezda. E.A. Shevardnadze', *Pravda*, 11 July 1990.

1573 John-Thor Dahlburg, *Los Angeles Times*, 6 July 1990, as quoted by Foye, 'Defense Issues at the Party Congress,' p. 2.

extent, the important point to consider is not whether the military's criticism at the Russian and Soviet party congresses was the tip of an iceberg of military grumbling and dissatisfaction – a point that can be taken for granted – but whether its exponents were the spearhead of a coordinated effort to intervene in politics or even the organizational core of a military coup. Such an interpretation is essentially incorrect. The following considerations support this conclusion.[1574]

One is the low rank of some of the most vociferous military critics. Alksnis and Petrushenko were merely colonels – the 'black colonels' as they were called derisively by civilian reformers – and they lacked the standing and a wider base in the military establishment that would justify regarding them leaders of a political revolt. Neither was ethnically and culturally 'true-blooded' Russian, Alksnis being Latvian and Petrushenko Belorussian. Their support and that of the conservative Soyuz parliamentary group, where they played a prominent role, was drawn mostly from assimilated non-Russians or Russians from outside the RSFSR.[1575] Makashov's extreme reactionary diatribes could only serve to undermine rather than support the formulation of a politically sound and coordinated military position that could be taken seriously and become politically effective. Lizichev, Boiko and Mikulin were political officers and because of that function presumably more representative of the views of the party than of the professional officers' corps. Only Khvatov was a high-ranking professional military officer but his position and influence in the armed forces, like that of the others critics, was also not comparable to that of, say, the commanders of the five branches of the Soviet armed forces or the chiefs of the Moscow and Leningrad military districts.

Another reason for questioning the validity of the theory that the military critics at the party congresses were the spearhead and organizational core of a coordinated effort to topple the political leadership and change security policy is the failure of the *top* military leaders, at a crucial juncture of Soviet domestic politics, to provide public backing for the critics' frontal attack. Whereas Yazov, in two interviews at the end of June, had

1574 Concerning the role of the armed forces in the demise of the Soviet Union see Hannes Adomeit, 'Der Machtverlust der Sowjetarmee als Machtfaktor,' in Martin Malek and Anna Schor- Tschudnowskaja, eds., *Der Zerfall der Sowjetunion: Ursachen, Begleiterscheinungen, Hintergründe* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2013), pp. 187-202.

1575 Miller, *Gorbachev*, p. 164.

indeed associated himself with some of the positions at variance with those of the political leadership and had again rejected the ideas of German NATO membership and asymmetrical cuts in conventional weapons,[1576] he gave an essentially bland and non-committal speech at the Twenty-eighth Party Congress. In the circumstances, this could be interpreted as support, albeit lukewarm, for the president. Moiseev's speech was more critical, but at the same time he defended Gorbachev against some of the charges of complacency and failure to meet rising dangers, stating that the Soviet Union possessed 'a reliable rocket shield that ensures its full security'.[1577]

Another reason lies in the attention paid by the congress to a myriad of other issues. In relative perspective, Eastern Europe and unified Germany's membership in NATO were neither treated extensively nor were they the most contentious. Scrutiny of the transcripts indicates that the most controversial issues were personnel and party power and organization; 'depolitization' (*depolitizatsiia*) and 'departization' (*departizatsiia*) that is, dissolution of the party structures, in the armed forces, the internal security ministry, and the KGB; the crisis of ideology; the abysmal state of the economy; the problems of national emancipation in the USSR, such as the Baltic crisis and the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh; the extent of republican sovereignty; and the resignation of the Democratic Platform from the CPSU, including its leading members Yeltsin, Gavril Popov and Anatoli Sobchak (the latter two being the mayors of Moscow and Leningrad), and the historian Yuri Afanasev.

Yet another reason for doubting the organizational cohesion and political effectiveness of military opposition lay in the fact that the armed forces were internally divided. There was no unanimity even on the issue that could be considered central to the military's concerns: united Germany's membership in NATO. Maj.-Gen. Geli Batenin is an example of the divergence of views. In an article for an East German newspaper published on 4 May, he rejected both the concept of dual membership of a united Germany in the two blocs – a concept, he thought, was 'favoured

1576 *Rabochaia tribuna*, 26 June 1990, and TASS, 27 June 1990, as quoted by Foye, 'Military Hard-Liner Condemns "New Thinking"', p. 6.

1577 TASS, 5 July 1990, as quoted by Foye, 'Defense Issues at the Party Congress,' p. 2.

by the Soviet foreign minister' – and German neutrality.[1578] He based his case against the *dual membership* idea on the premise that such a solution would be useful only if the Warsaw Pact had some prospects to become a viable organization. After the formation of the new governments in Central and Eastern Europe, however, he saw no chance of that happening: 'Czechoslovakia, one of the most important Warsaw Pact countries in military terms', he wrote, 'is practically on the verge of leaving the alliance. Similar developments can be observed in Hungary and Romania.' Furthermore, he reasoned, dual membership would have a destabilizing effect 'on the process of unification of the two Germanys because in this way confrontation between the Warsaw Pact and NATO will continue to be focused on the territory of the united Germany'.

Batenin also argued that a *neutral or non-aligned* Germany would not be in line with European security interests. 'The military and economic potential of a unified Germany concentrated in the centre of Europe', he contended, 'would give rise to serious concerns among its neighbours.' The chances were slim, he continued, that a united Germany would voluntarily accept military-political impotence, and it was for that reason that demilitarization of Germany should be ruled out, except within the context of coordinated and comprehensive European arms control and disarmament measures. The best solution in Batenin's view, therefore, was

> *to include the whole of Germany into the political organization of NATO*. The military jurisdiction of NATO will remain effective on the territory of the present-day FRG. In other words, concerning its military incorporation in NATO, Germany will retain its current status during the entire transition period [of perhaps five to ten years]. The Bundeswehr, being part of NATO's integrated command structure, will remain within the boundaries of the western part of a united Germany. In the eastern part, the National People's Army will

1578 Maj. Gen. Geli Viktorovich Batenin, 'Vorgezogene Version: Ganz Deutschland in der NATO', *Berliner Zeitung*, 4 May 1990. At the time when his article was published, Batenin was assigned to the Central Committee's Ideological Department. Importantly for the current context, he was not a political officer without professional experience. According to information which he himself provided in an interview with Hans-Henning Schröder of the then Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien in Cologne, he was born in Vladivostok, entered officer's school in the 1950s, was commissioned first as an artillery officer and then in the rocket forces, served in the General Staff specializing in nuclear strategy and, in 1989-90, was involved in drafting the Soviet position in the CFE negotiations. He was also a member of the Soviet delegation during Gorbachev's visit to West Germany in June 1989.

> continue to exist but *it will no longer be under the operational control of the Warsaw Pact.*[1579]

Even more at variance with conservative military opinion, in an earlier interview with a German defense specialist, he had stated: 'To maintain a dividing line between Germany and Germany, or between Germany and Poland, is unacceptable. That would mean to remain stuck in outdated thinking. ... Both alliances [for the duration of the Warsaw Pact's existence] have to link up with each other in order to overcome this division.'[1580]

One of the possible options for the military to delay, deflect or derail Gorbachev's impending decision on Germany's NATO membership in the spring and summer of 1990 was to forge an alliance with conservative party officials. The CPSU, however, was in disarray.[1581] The legislative and executive branches of government, including and above all the emerging presidential structures, were beginning to replace the party's power and influence; its Marxist-Leninist foundation lay in shambles; and its popularity was being eroded by glasnost. A neo-Stalinist Communist Party of Russia (CPRF) was created to compete against both its communist parent and the decidedly more democratic and liberally inclined Russian Congress of People's Deputies. Another split, one involving the CPSU itself, was imminent, with the members of its Democratic Platform, as mentioned, about to leave the party and perhaps intent on creating a new social-democratic entity. In March 1990, the constitutional article guaranteeing a political monopoly to the CPSU had been abolished; the Central Committee was involved in a bitter dispute with 'social' organizations' such as the Komsomol and labour unions; its Secretariat had been emasculated; and rank-and-file members were leaving in droves.

Furthermore, the once mighty Politburo was now a stricken and internally divided group that had seen its decision-making power and authority curtailed progressively since the October 1988 party reorganization and

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1579 Ibid. (italics mine).

1580 Batenin interview with Hans-Henning Schröder, Moscow, 4 April 1990.

1581 This analysis of the role of the CPSU and CPR in Soviet decision-making on unified Germany and NATO draws on Fredo Arias-King, 'Essence of a Soviet Decision: Allowing a United Germany to Join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. An Organizational-Bureaucratic Approach', Research Paper, the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, January 1996 (unpublished), pp. 1-16.

was scheduled to be further emasculated at the Twenty-eighth CPSU Congress. At that congress, its full and alternate members had to answer for the massive failures of the Soviet economy and other domestic ills: Prime Minister Ryzhkov and his deputy and planning chief Yuri Maslyukov on the economic decline; Vadim Medvedev on the demise of Marxism; Lev Zaikov on the bloated and inefficient military-industrial complex; and Georgi Razumovsky on personnel policy and the drain of the party membership. Ligachev, who had vehemently attacked Gorbachev's policy on the German issue at the February Central Committee plenum and was to do so again at the Twenty-eighth Party Congress, certainly was one of the potential organizers of a revolt against the president. But the PB, in conjunction with the CC, could no longer remove Gorbachev from the office of General Secretary, let alone from the presidency.[1582] Furthermore, Ligachev's power was waning and, indeed, at the congress, he was ousted.

Although in no way an action channel for Soviet foreign policy or even domestic politics, the Communist Party of Russia exerted some influence on decision-making but in ways quite contrary to its members' intentions. Given its utterly reactionary and unrepresentative nature, the fierce attacks directed at the founding congress against Gorbachev, Yakovlev, Shevardnadze as well as against moderate or conservative party officials not only served to further delegitimize communism but forced moderate party leaders to side with the reformers. This occurred, for instance, at the Russian Congress of People's Deputies, held at the same time as the CPR's inaugural congress. At the former congress, CPR spokesmen blasted a large part of the CPSU's moderate strata, insulting even the stalwart economist Leonid Abalkin and vowing to cleanse 'cancerous tumours,' including *Pravda* (!), and to re-impose censorship. What about a possible alliance between the hard-line military opposition, like-minded officials in the CPSU, and the CPR? This, too, would have been counterproductive. Even Ligachev was averse to associating himself with this new party entity and Igor Polozkov, its new leader, and openly criticized him. Similarly, on the day of his election as CPR chairman, the nightly news program Vremya

1582 This required a two-thirds vote of the legislature.

chose not to cover the proceedings, featuring instead a story on Yeltsin and Popov.[1583]

To summarize, although the military criticism of the political leadership's policies on the withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces from Eastern Europe and NATO's first eastern enlargement was certainly indicative of wide-spread dissatisfaction in the armed forces, it should not be interpreted as proof of a coordinated attempt to intervene in domestic politics. This was because of the relatively low rank and standing of the most vociferous critics in the military establishment; the disassociation of the top military leadership from both extreme positions and direct involvement in politics; and internal divisions concerning the most appropriate response to a rapidly changing security environment in East Germany and Eastern Europe. As for military and party collusion, by the spring and summer of 1990 Gorbachev had effectively emasculated the party apparatus and curtailed the party's and the military's influence in international security decision-making by transferring many of their previous functions to a combination of reformist foreign ministry personnel, academic specialists and a small circle of like-minded decision-makers. There was no unanimity of views in the military. The party was hopelessly divided, and the creation of the reactionary Russian Communist Party unwittingly served to undercut the construction of a reasonable conservative alternative to Gorbachev's international security policies and drive moderate party leaders into his camp. The Twenty-eighth Party Congress, therefore, contrary to his and his supporter's anxiety, did not turn into a major impediment to his policies but, perhaps paradoxically, even helped facilitate his consent to unified Germany's membership in NATO.

In the remaining sections, the timing and circumstances of that consent will be described. Three possible explanations will be examined. First, the Soviet Union may have been running out of viable alternative options. Second, the West may have offered sufficiently favourable conditions. Third, Gorbachev came to accept that unified Germany's membership in NATO served Soviet security interests better than any other possible solution. Evidently, none of these explanations are mutually exclusive.

1583 Arias-King, 'Essence of a Soviet Decision', p. 11; Alexander Rahr, 'The Russian Triangle: Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Polozkov', *Report on the USSR* (Radio Liberty, Munich), Vol. 2, No. 27 (July 1990), p. 5.

The Consent to NATO Membership

When Chernyaev was asked, when it was that Gorbachev consented to unified Germany's membership in NATO, he unhesitatingly replied: 'At the Soviet-American summit.' When the supplementary question was put to him, what had induced the Soviet leader to change his mind, the answer was equally short and precise: 'Baker's nine points.'[1584] From 16 to 19 May, Baker had again visited Moscow and talked to Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, with the German problem as the main focus of discussion. The secretary of state presented a comprehensive package of incentives designed to persuade Gorbachev to accept the basic foundation of all subsequent and supplementary measures for a German settlement. As Baker has explained in his memoirs, the nine points had been advanced individually 'but by wrapping them up in a package and calling them 'nine assurances' we greatly enhanced their political effect'.[1585] The nine points were as follows:

1. Limitation of the size of armed forces in Europe, including in Central Europe, in a CFE agreement, with further reductions to be provided for in CFE follow-on negotiations.
2. The beginning of arms control negotiations on short-range nuclear missiles to be moved up.
3. Reaffirmation by Germany that it would neither possess nor produce nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons.
4. No NATO forces to be stationed on the former territory of the GDR during a specified transition period.
5. An appropriate transition period to be agreed upon for the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from German territory.
6. A comprehensive review of NATO strategy and change of NATO's conventional and nuclear force posture.
7. Settlement of Germany's future borders, that is, essentially confirmation of the Polish-German frontier.
8. Enhancement of the functions of the CSCE to ensure a significant role for the Soviet Union in Europe and linkage of a summit meeting of that organization with the finalization of a CFE treaty, both to take place at the end of 1990.

1584 Interview with Chernyaev.
1585 Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 251n.

9. Development of Germany's economic ties with the Soviet Union, including fulfillment of the GDR's economic obligations to the USSR.[1586]

Gorbachev took copious notes of Baker's presentation. But his reaction was contradictory. He approved much of what the secretary of state had said but adhered to the by then standard Soviet position that it was impossible for the Soviet Union to accept a unified Germany in NATO. This would constitute a fundamental shift in the strategic balance of forces and jeopardize his program at home. 'It will be the end of perestroika', he warned. Although he knew that united Germany would remain close to the United States, it still should not be in the Western alliance. If that was unacceptable to the United States, then perhaps the Soviet Union should be admitted to NATO.[1587] His ambiguous and conceptually incoherent position was reflected also in his reply to Baker's question as to whether, by insisting that Germany remain outside NATO, he was talking about a *neutral* Germany. 'I don't know if I'd call it that', Gorbachev said. 'Maybe I'd call it nonaligned.'[1588]

The nine points also figured prominently at the Soviet-American summit in Washington, 30 May-3 June.[1589] On 31 May, in response to President Bush's review of the assurances, Gorbachev initially reiterated the intransigent Soviet position (letting a united Germany join only NATO would 'unbalance' Europe), and he repeated the alternatives he preferred: Germany should either be a member of both alliances or not belong to any

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1586 Ibid, pp. 250-51; and Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 263-64. The nine points were prepared by National Security Council staff member Robert Zoellick. Earlier on the same day, Zoellick, National Security Council expert on Soviet affairs Condoleezza Rice and Raymond Seitz of the State Department's European bureau had discussed these points with Kvitsinsky and Bondarenko. Confirmation of this and other points related to the U.S.-Soviet summit as provided by Zoellick in conversation with the author at a conference of the Freie Universität Berlin on 5 July 1994, attended by the Political Directors of the Two Plus Four negotiations.

1587 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 265.

1588 Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 251.

1589 On 30 May, Gorbachev had arrived in Washington from Ottawa. In talks with Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney, the Soviet president again had shown no flexibility on the German problem. The account of the proceedings at the Soviet-American summit follows Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 276-81. An earlier, less detailed, account of the meeting can be found in Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, pp. 215-30.

alliance. Shevardnadze supported the dual membership idea and Gorbachev added that perhaps *any* country could join either alliance, musing (again) whether the Soviet Union should apply for NATO membership. (Bush, with a smile, wondered how Marshal Akhromeev – sitting across the table – would like serving under an American NATO commander.) The American president then introduced an argument that other US and West German officials had begun to employ at lower levels. Under the CSCE's principles in the Helsinki Final Act, all nations had the right to choose their own alliances. Should Germany, too, not have the right to decide for itself which alliance it would want to join? Gorbachev nodded and in a matter of fact way confirmed that it did.[1590]

That nod amounted to a bombshell, but did Gorbachev actually mean what he said? For the American negotiators, it was important to ascertain whether his change of position was merely a *lapsus linguae* and temporary aberration or, if not, to induce him to commit himself publicly to the reversal of position. Prompted by a note from Robert Blackwill, Bush said: 'I am gratified that you and I seem to agree that nations can choose their own alliances.' Gorbachev reiterated the reversal: 'So we will put it this way. The United States and the Soviet Union are in favor of Germany deciding herself [after a Two Plus Four settlement] in which alliance she would like to participate.'[1591] As for a public commitment to the changed state of affairs, the NSC staff prepared a statement for the president to be delivered on 3 June, at the end of the summit conference. It submitted the draft statement to Soviet ambassador Alexander Bessmertnykh for his review and approval by Gorbachev. There were no objections. The statement read:

> On the matter of Germany's external alliances, I believe, as do Chancellor Kohl and members of the Alliance, that the united Germany should be a full member of NATO. President Gorbachev, frankly, does not hold that view. But

1590 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 277. Participants in the meeting on the Soviet side included Shevardnadze, Chernyaev, Akhromeev, Falin, Dobrynin, and Alexander Bessmertnykh, the Soviet ambassador in Washington.

1591 There is a discrepancy in the rendering of the conversation between the American account, as reconstructed by Zelikow and Rice, and the Soviet version, as contained in Gorbachev's and Chernyaev's memoirs. According to the latter account, 'the Soviet Union' was omitted in Gorbachev's reply (Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 2, p. 175; Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 348).

> we are in full agreement that the matter of alliance membership is, in accordance with the Helsinki Final Act, a matter for the Germans to decide.[1592]

The *de facto* consent to unified Germany's membership in NATO was completely unexpected by any of the participants, American or Soviet. On the Soviet side, there had been no prior consultation or coordination. Gorbachev had acted unilaterally and spontaneously. Even his personal assistant on foreign policy had not been alerted to the impending change of his chief's position.[1593] In the White House's Cabinet Room on 31 May, there was consequently a palpable atmosphere among Soviet participants, who almost physically distanced themselves from Gorbachev's remarks. Akhromeev and Falin could be observed uncomfortably shifting in their seats.[1594] Gorbachev slipped a piece of paper to the latter, asking him to explain the legal, political, and military rationales that made a pro-Atlantic solution unacceptable. Falin replied on that paper that he was ready to do so.[1595] While he launched into his presentation, Gorbachev conferred with Shevardnadze. When Gorbachev re-entered the discussion, he proposed that Shevardnadze work with Baker on the German issue. Oddly, Shevardnadze at first refused, right in front of the Americans, saying that the matter had to be decided by the heads of government.[1596]

It is appropriate to clarify at this stage that Gorbachev's agreement with the Western position that Germany be allowed to choose the alliance membership it wanted was neither unconditional nor irreversible. In *his* mind, at least, there vaguely still existed different options, one of which would somehow make it possible to avoid Germany's full membership in NATO.[1597] The ambiguities of his position were reflected in his public stance. On 12 June, in his report on the Soviet-American summit to the Supreme Soviet, Gorbachev said that he had 'told the president that I think that the American presence in Europe, since it fulfils a certain role in maintaining stability, is an element of the strategic situation and does not represent a problem for us.' He also outlined a solution, according to

1592 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 281.
1593 Interview with Chernyaev.
1594 Zoellick, personal communication to the author; Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 253; and Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 277-78.
1595 Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, p. 493.
1596 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 278.
1597 Interview with Chernyaev.

which 'the Bundeswehr would, as before, be subordinate to NATO, and the East German troops would be *subordinate to the new Germany',* which obviously meant that they would no longer be subordinate to the Warsaw Pact.[1598] However, this applied only to a 'transition period'. How long that period would last and what would happen if the new Germany would choose to stay in NATO was left open by Gorbachev. The murky security waters were muddied further by the ideas, also mentioned in his report, of 'associate membership' of the GDR in the Warsaw Pact and a unified Germany having to 'honour all obligations' inherited from the two Germanys, and by his return to the 'dual membership' proposal.[1599] Only one thing was crystal clear: there was complete and in all likelihood deliberate lack of clarity in the Soviet stance, except for the fact that the notion of a unified Germany in NATO as being absolutely unacceptable was no longer valid.

This applied also to Shevardnadze's position. His initial recalcitrance at the Soviet-American summit to work with Baker on details of a security arrangement that would – in accordance with Gorbachev's spontaneous consent – proceed from the premise of unified Germany's membership in NATO did not mean that the foreign minister objected to the principle of the revised Soviet stance. In the internal management of the issue, however, it was sensible for him to let *Gorbachev* take responsibility rather than leading or leaving the conservative opposition to believe that yet another fundamental change in international security policy had unilaterally been decided by the foreign minister.

If it is correct that Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and Yakovlev were now resigned to accept a formula that would allow unified Germany to join NATO, how could they explain and justify the fundamental change of position? How if at all, could they assuage the conservative opposition and the public at large? Much depended on whether they could deliver on two crucial issues: the *transformation of NATO* and *transitional arrangements* until the consolidation of a new European security system. As for the first, the Soviet leadership had to be able to portray an alliance that would transform itself from a primarily military alliance to one emphasizing its political character – a demand that had figured prominently as soon as German

1598 'Vystuplenie M.S. Gorbacheva na tret'ei sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR', *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 13 June 1990.

1599 Ibid. (italics mine).

unification had been put on the international agenda.[1600] At the 5 July London summit, as will be shown below, the West would make an effort to accommodate this demand.

Concerning the issue of a *transition period*, to borrow a phrase from the Nixon administration's problem to explain the inevitability of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam and the hand-over of power to the Viet Cong, a 'decent interval' was needed for the Soviet leadership to save face. Similarly, at the 11 June meeting between Shevardnadze and Genscher in Brest, the Soviet foreign minister had put forward the basic rationale for a transitional period. If there was to be no such period, he argued, the Soviet Union would be isolated. The political and military balance in Europe would be changed. The GDR would be part of NATO. And the Soviet Union would have no guarantees for its security.[1601] But what should be the content of such a period? Specifically, what should be the length of time during which the Soviet armed forces should be allowed to stay in East Germany? What would be their status? Should the alliances themselves only exist for a transitional period and then be dissolved in favor of a new European security system? If so, in accordance with the equivalency principle, should the Western allied forces, like those of the Soviet Union, only be permitted to stay for a specified period and then also be withdrawn from Germany?

Some of these issues were addressed in a draft treaty on the external aspects of German unification prepared by the MFA's Third Department (Bondarenko) and tabled by Shevardnadze at the 22 June Two Plus Four meeting in East Berlin. For at least five years after unification, according to the draft, all the GDR's international agreements would remain in force; the competence of the Warsaw Pact and NATO could not be changed and would not extend to territories that had previously not been within their scope; ceilings on German armed forces would be imposed in quantity (no more than 200,000 to 250,000 troops) and in quality, with implementation of the reductions and structural changes within three years. After five years, the troop contingents of the Four Powers would either be withdrawn or retained at token levels; the Bundeswehr and the East German National People's Army would be confined to their former territories. The settle-

1600 See above, p. 616.
1601 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, p. 811.

ment of these issues would remain in effect until both NATO and the Warsaw Pact were dissolved or Germany withdrew from both alliances.[1602]

The MFA's draft evidently was completely unacceptable to Western negotiators and quickly passed into oblivion. In that meeting of 22 June, as Shevardnadze was speaking, Baker passed a note to Genscher asking, 'What does this mean?' Genscher (accurately) replied: 'Window dressing.'[1603] The West German foreign minister was apparently confident that the presentation of the draft was essentially a holding operation designed to gain time and to prepare the Soviet foreign policy establishment and public opinion to accept the inevitable. That confidence he derived from an earlier meeting with Shevardnadze, on 18 June in Münster, where Frank Elbe, his aide, had been given a 'non-paper' by Tarasenko that did not contain any reference to the retention of Four Power rights after the end of a transition period, and where he (Elbe) had been told 'not to worry'. Everything would 'proceed as [outlined] in this [non-]paper'.[1604]

To return to the central issue of the Soviet leadership's consent to unified Germany's membership in NATO, at the beginning of July the stage for the formal consent was set: various alternative options had been presented and rejected by the West; a plethora of private talks and the Two Plus Four meetings at the foreign ministers' level had clarified the form that could be attached to the eastward extension of NATO: non-integrated German units could be stationed in the former GDR immediately after Germany regained full sovereignty, and German NATO-integrated forces could be deployed there after the withdrawal of Soviet troops, but no allied forces; Germany would not produce or possess nuclear, bacteriological or chemical weapons; NATO, at its London summit, had ostensibly committed itself to a transformation of its structure and its role in Europe; the G-7, at its meeting in Houston, had held out the prospect of economic assistance; Kohl had committed himself to codifying a complete rearrangement of German-Soviet political and economic relations in a comprehensive bilateral treaty and to accept the Polish-German borders as final; Lithuania had created favourable conditions for a policy change in Moscow by suspending its declaration of independence; and the conservative opposition of Soviet party and foreign ministry officials and military officers had been out-manoeuvred or isolated itself and was politically in-

1602 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, pp. 296-97.
1603 Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 824-25.
1604 Ibid., p. 821, and Kiessler and Elbe, *Ein runder Tisch*, p. 159.

effective as both the Russian and Soviet party congresses had demonstrated. The stage was set for the formal consent to unified Germany's membership in NATO during Chancellor Kohl visit to the Soviet Union from 14 to 16 July.[1605]

On 11 July, in a letter to Kohl, Gorbachev had confirmed his invitation for the German chancellor to visit the Soviet Union, including the suggestion for a side-trip to Stavropol, the town and krai where he had grown up and begun his career, and the small North Caucasian mountain resort of Arkhyz, about 100 miles south of the city. The suggestion was obviously meant to provide a personal touch to the visit and set the stage for a repetition of the informal conversations which the two leaders had had in June 1989 along the banks of the Rhine, and it augured well for what the German participants could expect from the talks.[1606] According to the accounts provided by Chernyaev and Teltschik, the breakthrough on the main issues took place on 15 July in Moscow, in the guest house of the Soviet foreign ministry on Tolstoy street. The private conversations between Kohl and Gorbachev were witnessed only by the two aides and interpreters.[1607]

1605 The significance of the Lithuanian decision and of the results of the London and Houston summits will be discussed below, pp. 650, 668 and 670-71.

1606 This was recognized by Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 310; for the informal conversations between Kohl and Gorbachev on the banks along the Rhine, see above, pp. 483-84. Gorbachev's commitment to hold talks in the second half of July and to include the Caucasus as their venue had occurred on 14 May, when Teltschik had been on a secret mission to Moscow.

1607 The subsequent account of the 15 July talks is based on ibid., pp. 319-24 and Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, pp. 358-59. Kohl's memoirs essentially confirm these accounts; Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 421-44. There are some important differences in the portrayal and interpretation of the talks between Teltschik and Chernyaev, on the one hand, and that of Kohl on the other. These will be pointed out below, pp. 641-42. – Concerning decision-making processes in the Soviet Union, immediately prior to the Kohl visit, Falin had become a mere footnote to Soviet history on the German problem. According to his own account, as Kohl was already on his way to Moscow, he called Gorbachev and asked for ten to fifteen minutes of his time. Shortly before midnight, the Soviet leader obliged and returned the call. Falin wanted to impress three points on Gorbachev for the upcoming negotiations. (1) An *Anschluß* on the basis of article 23 should be ruled out. (2) Unified Germany should not be allowed to become a full member of NATO. At the very least, if he (Gorbachev) were to agree to it nevertheless, Germany's status should be similar to that of France, but under no circumstances should nuclear weapons be stationed in any part of

The German chancellor pointed out that these were historic times and that the opportunities that had presented themselves should be used to good effect. Bismarck had once said that one had to seize the coattails of history.[1608] Gorbachev replied that he had not been aware of this remark but that he found it quite interesting and agreed with it. Kohl reminded his host that they both belonged to the same generation – too young to fight in the Second World War but old enough consciously to experience these years. Against the background of their common experience, the German chancellor continued, they had an obligation to use the opportunities for change.

Kohl had apparently struck a responsive chord in Gorbachev. He replied that he was ten years old when the war began and that he could remember very well the events that had occurred during the war. He said that he shared Kohl's view that their generation possessed unique experiences and he also agreed that, if unique opportunities for change existed now, it was the task of that generation to use and shape them. He was impressed above all by the fact that there was less talk now as to who had won or lost the war and a greater understanding of one world.

The German chancellor then spoke of the trust that he thought had developed between them in their conversations in Bonn in June 1989, in the park of the chancellor's office, on the banks of the Rhine. On that occasion, they had talked of their common obligation to shape the future of their peoples and to develop relations of friendship, he reminded Gorbachev. He, Kohl, still considered this exchange to have been an event of fundamental importance that had established a relationship of trust between them.

The next portion of the exchange between the two leaders is of crucial importance for appreciating the new frame of reference that had developed in Gorbachev's mind. Rather than continuing to see the world through the prism of Marxism-Leninism and the state interests of the Soviet Union, he

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Germany. (3) No agreement on the political issues should be signed unless all matters concerning Soviet assets in the GDR were settled. Gorbachev asked a few polite questions and concluded the conversation by saying, 'I will do what I can. Only I fear that the train has already left.' Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, pp. 493-94.

1608 Bismarck had said: 'The essence of] politics is to listen to God's steps through world history, to then link up and attempt to seize the tail of His coat.' (*Politik ist, dass man Gottes Schritt durch die Weltgeschichte hört, dann zuspringt und versucht, einen Zipfel seines Mantels zu fassen*.)

reverted to national images. He introduced what he himself called thoughts of a basic nature. A situation was now developing, he said, that had to bring *Russia* and Germany together again. If both *peoples* had been separated in the past, they now had to come together again. For him that goal was equally important as the normalization of relations with the United States. If it were possible to find a new quality in the relations between Russia and Germany, both peoples and all of Europe would benefit.

The German chancellor agreed and provided incentives for Gorbachev to consent to German demands. The Federal Republic, he said, was prepared to conclude a comprehensive treaty with the Soviet Union to cover all areas of cooperation. To be included in such a treaty could be principles such as the renunciation of force and non-aggression, along the lines of provisions contained in the declaration adopted at the July NATO summit meeting in London. Furthermore, reporting on the results of the summit meetings of the European Council in Dublin, NATO in London and the G-7 in Houston, he assured Gorbachev that the common theme at all of these meetings had been the conviction that the processes of reform in the Soviet Union had to be supported. Kohl then added another incentive by stating that, in his view, economic and financial cooperation were an integral part of the total package.

He also addressed the dynamic process of German unification and described the still deteriorating conditions in the GDR. As if in response to what had been a recurrent Soviet warning since the autumn of 1989, he assured Gorbachev that he was not attempting to accelerate matters artificially. From the very beginning, he had had different ideas as to the time scale of unification. He would have liked to have had more time, he said regretfully, but the economic decline of the GDR had been dramatic. Turning to specific problems to be resolved, Kohl mentioned three areas in which agreement had to be reached if the time-table for the conclusion of the Two Plus Four talks and the CSCE summit conference were to be met: the withdrawal of Soviet Union forces from East Germany; membership of a united Germany in NATO; and the numerical strength of the armed forces of the united country. Restoration of full sovereignty of Germany had to be the final result of the Two Plus Four talks.

The two leaders exchanged papers (evidently prepared by Teltschik and Chernyaev) containing their mutual ideas about the provisions to be contained in a treaty on partnership and cooperation to be concluded between the Soviet Union and Germany.

Gorbachev then returned to security issues. Germany, he acknowledged, should regain full sovereignty. On the central issue of NATO, Gorbachev said that membership of unified Germany in that alliance constituted the most important problem. *De jure* the question was unambiguous. *De facto* matters were more complicated. NATO authority could not immediately be extended to the former territory of the GDR. A transitional period was necessary. Kohl and Teltschik were stunned as to that apparent consent to united Germany's membership in NATO. Six weeks earlier, at the US-Soviet summit, the consent was implied but this time it was explicit. The German chancellor outwardly reacted calmly and was eager to make sure that there had been no misunderstanding. Pressed by him, Gorbachev clarified that *Germany could remain in NATO* but the Western alliance NATO had to take into consideration that its authority could not be extended to the territory of the former GDR for a transitional period, that is, for as long as Soviet troops continued to be stationed there. He reinforced this historic concession by a second commitment. The final settlement in the Two Plus Four framework should provide for the *immediate* abolition of Four Power rights. A separate treaty should govern the status of the Soviet armed forces on the territory of the former GDR.

The historical record at this point remains somewhat unclear. Kohl and Teltschik's account differ on both what Gorbachev said subsequently and on the implications of what he had said. Concerning the issue of the status of the Soviet forces and a future treaty on the modalities of their withdrawal, Gorbachev – according to Kohl – had stated that negotiations on that issue could begin after an (unspecified) transitional period.[1609] Teltschik, in contrast, does not record Gorbachev mentioning anything about the beginning of such negotiations. He also has Gorbachev saying that the treaty ought to govern the presence of the Soviet forces for a period of three to four years.[1610] The inference to be drawn from this is that negotiations could begin immediately, without any transitional period.

The second issue of divergence concerns Gorbachev's distinction between Germany's *de jure* and *de facto* NATO membership. What Gorbachev seemed to have in mind, according to Kohl, was to limit NATO for all practical purposes to the western part of Germany and that any change of that restriction could only be agreed upon later, after the successful con-

1609 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 425.
1610 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 324.

clusion of the negotiations on the withdrawal of Soviet forces. Contrary to his host's assurances, as Kohl correctly wrote, the Federal Republic would not have regained sovereignty after all. The later negotiations on the withdrawal of forces would have provided Moscow with a lever with which to exert pressure on Bonn to accede to Soviet demands on the alliance problem.[1611] Apparently sensing the disappointment of his guest, Kohl continues, Gorbachev said reassuringly: 'We have [only] begun our talks here in Moscow and will continue them in the Caucasus mountains. In the mountain air, things will be seen much more clearly.'[1612]

Teltschik did not share Kohl's scepticism. For Chernyaev, too, the matter was settled. In his view, his chief had no longer suggested any 'diluted versions' on Germany's full membership in NATO. In accordance with his position and protocol, Chernyaev should have accompanied his chief to the Caucasus. However, he talked his way out of it. 'The issue has already been settled in Moscow,' he thought, 'and I would only get in the way.' As a reflection of the tremendous strain under which he and others in Gorbachev's entourage were working, he had another, more important reason why he chose not to go along: 'I had taken a dislike to Gorbachev since the events at the two party congresses. I did not want to be near him. In my opinion, he did not even notice my absence on the trip. More and more often I thought of resigning.'[1613]

It was only on 16 July in Arkhyz, after having 'argued back and forth', according to Kohl, with Gorbachev 'yielding step by step to our tenacious urging', that the Soviet president relented and agreed that German troops, as part of NATO's integrated command structure, could be stationed on the territory of the former GDR.[1614] The final agreement reached at the talks was announced at the neighbouring spa of Zheleznovodsk. It consisted of the following eight points:

1611 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 425.
1612 Ibid., p. 426.
1613 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 359.
1614 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 435. Genscher appears to concur with the interpretation that this issue was settled only in Arkhyz; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 839-40.

1. A unified Germany shall comprise the Federal Republic, the GDR, and Berlin.
2. The rights and responsibilities of the Four Powers will end after the achievement of German unification, and unified Germany will enjoy full and unrestricted sovereignty.
3. The unified Germany, exercising its unrestricted sovereignty and in accordance with the Helsinki Final Act, may decide freely and by itself which alliance it wants to belong to.
4. The unified Germany and the Soviet Union will conclude a bilateral treaty providing for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the GDR within three to four years. Another treaty will cover the consequences of the introduction of the Deutschmark in the GDR for this transitional period.
5. For as long as Soviet troops remain stationed on the territory of the former GDR, NATO structures will not be extended to this part of Germany. The immediate applicability of articles 5 and 6 of the NATO treaty will remain in effect. Non-integrated units of the Bundeswehr – that is, units of the Territorial Defense – may be stationed immediately after unification on the territory of the GDR and Berlin.
6. Troops of the three Western powers shall remain in Berlin for the duration of the presence of Soviet troops on former GDR territory. The Federal government will seek to conclude corresponding agreements with the three Western governments.
7. The Federal government is willing to make a binding declaration in the current CFE talks in Vienna to reduce the level of the armed forces of a unified Germany to 370,000 soldiers and that this is to be achieved in a period of three to four years.
8. A unified Germany will refrain from producing, storing, or controlling nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and continue to adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.[1615]

It is now appropriate to return to the rationale and reasons why Gorbachev relented and acceded practically without dilution or modification to all the

1615 This enumeration is derived from Kohl's statement at the 16 July press conference in Zheleznovodsk, as carried by the German news agencies and TASS; 'Press-konferentsiia M.S. Gorbacheva i G. Kolia', *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 18 July 1990, and 'Excerpts from Kohl-Gorbachev News Conference', *New York Times*, 17 July 1990. The announcement was structured in seven points; points five and six, as presented here, were merged in Kohl's statement.

positions on the international security status of a unified Germany as developed by the West, foremost by the United States and West Germany. The domestic dimension of his consent has amply been covered. What remains to be examined in more detail are the international rationales of the consent.

The Demise of the Warsaw Pact

The central point to be made about the international dimension of Gorbachev's consent to unified Germany's membership in NATO is that in the spring of 1990 the Soviet Union was running out of options: the neutralization of Germany failed to attract support in both Eastern and Western Europe and in the United States, and ideas such as 'dual membership' of Germany in both alliances and 'associate membership' of the eastern part of Germany in the Warsaw Pact were rendered obsolete by the rapid disintegration of the latter alliance. Were Gorbachev, his close advisers, and Shevardnadze conscious of these constraints?

Concerning the issue of neutralization, matters were fairly simple. At the February 1990 Open Skies foreign ministers' meeting of NATO and the Warsaw Pact in Ottawa, it had become apparent that only two foreign ministers were calling for the neutralization of Germany: Shevardnadze and East German Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer. At the mid-March 1990 Warsaw Pact foreign ministers' conference in Prague, the USSR and the GDR again found themselves in a minority on the issue. At the closing news conference, Czechoslovak foreign minister Jiří Dienstbier said that neutrality would be 'the worst alternative'.[1616] Polish foreign minister, Krystof Skubiszewski, agreed by making the point that a neutral Germany would 'not be good for Europe'; it would 'foster some tendencies in Germany to be a great power acting on its own'.[1617] Only the East German foreign minister, a member of the communist old guard, still supported his Soviet colleague. But he was to be replaced a few weeks later as a result of the free elections in the GDR. This settled the matter of neutralization once and for all.

1616 Celestine Bohlen, 'Warsaw Alliance Split on Germany', *New York Times*, 18 March 1990.

1617 Ibid.

As for the role of the Warsaw Pact in Europe, as mentioned above, Gorbachev had initiated a retreat from the traditional Soviet dissolution-of-the-blocs campaign during his June 1989 visit to West Germany and confirmed that retreat in talks with French foreign minister Dumas in November, after the fall of the Berlin wall, declaring that now was not the time to break up the established international political and economic institutions.[1618] That line continued into the spring of 1990. On 12 June, for instance, Gorbachev – reporting to the Supreme Soviet on the results of the Soviet-American summit in Washington – stated that the rival blocs would continue to exist 'for longer than might be imagined'.[1619] Was a new Europe then, with NATO but without the Warsaw Pact, inconceivable to Soviet decision makers? Was there a direct connection between the Soviet consent to membership of united Germany in NATO and the continued existence of the Warsaw Pact? But if so, how could Gorbachev ever have believed that it could be possible to salvage the Pact from the revolutions of 1989 in East Central Europe?

The answer lies in the vision and willingness of the Soviet political leadership and, *nolens volens*, the military to convert the Warsaw Pact from an instrument of Soviet domination and control to a *political* institution respecting the sovereignty of its member nations. Only in the medium to long term, they thought, would the alliances be dissolved in favor of a new European security structure. A transformation of the Warsaw Pact, they hoped, would be feasible even after the systemic changes in Eastern Europe because the 'state interests' of the member countries of the Pact would remain essentially unchanged. Marshal Akhromeev, in November 1989, had expressed this idea as follows:

> First of all, there's the stability of the territory and state boundaries. Second, there are the economic interests of the states. After all, they've been linked for many decades. That is why the military-political alliance remains. The *state interests of both alliances still remain*, and the contradictions remain. And a certain quantity of arms and armed forces will remain. But what matters is that it be such a quantity which would not permit the country to start a war, even if it wanted to.[1620]

1618 See above, p 605.

1619 'Vystuplenie M.S. Gorbacheva na tret'ei sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR', *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, 13 June 1990.

1620 Interview with Bill Keller, 'Gorbachev's Hope for Future: "A Common European Home"', *New York Times*, 30 November 1989 (italics mine).

In conformity with such rationales and rationalizations, the head of a department of the Soviet General Staff, Col. Gen. Nikolai Chervov, announced at a meeting of military chiefs from thirty-five nations held in Vienna in January 1990 to discuss military doctrine that the Warsaw Pact would be thoroughly restructured. The Pact's future, as a Soviet foreign ministry participant in the meeting explained, would be shaped by political and regional interests rather than by ideological solidarity.[1621]

The hope that after injection of a reformist antidote the moribund Warsaw Pact would survive and return to the life of European politics was encouraged by attitudes even in Poland in the first half of 1990. For a brief time interval, reflecting anxiety about the reconstitution of a potentially powerful Germany at its western borders, Poland remained committed to cooperation with the Soviet Union in a reformed Pact. The then Polish prime minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, made this clear when he said that, in its alliance with its eastern neighbour, Poland had passed from the ideological level to the state level. But this did 'not mean that at the state level we do not see the importance of this alliance for the problem of security for our borders'. He even argued that Soviet troops should remain in Poland because of 'the German problem'.[1622] Obviously under the impression of such statements, Gen. Batenin still thought in April that Poland would want to retain a Soviet military presence in the country and that the organization would still be viable, at least for a transitional period: 'The USSR and Poland – only two fingers are needed to count the members.' But other countries would be interested as well. 'Czechoslovakia, no matter what, will remain a member of the Warsaw Pact. [Czechoslovak president] Havel is now in an exceptional mood, [caught up in] the euphoria of power.' However, this mood would dissipate.[1623]

The Soviet concept for reform of the alliance was presented to the Pact members at two meetings in the spring of 1990. One was the 7 June conference of the Political Consultative Committee in Moscow, the other the Military Committee's gathering on 14-15 June in Strausberg near East

1621 Alan Riding, 'At Conference Soviet General Sees Changes in Warsaw Pact', *New York Times*, 18 January 1990; see also Maj. Gen. Yuri Kirshin, 'Why is Military Reform Needed', *New Times* (Moscow), No. 12 (March 1990), pp. 30-31.

1622 In a news conference in Warsaw, Associated Press (from Warsaw), 21 February 1990.

1623 Batenin interview with Hans-Henning Schröder in Moscow, 4 April 1990.

Berlin. Despite some differences of position, the trend that emerged from the final document adopted by the PCC and statements of participants at both meetings was clear. The member states, according to the declaration adopted at the Warsaw Pact summit meeting, would review the Warsaw Treaty and 'initiate efforts to transform it into a treaty of sovereign, equal states that is based on democratic principles'.[1624] The 'character, functions, and activities of the Warsaw Pact' were to be thoroughly reviewed. The organization was to change from a military alliance to a political organization with military consultation; the centralized, Soviet-controlled command structure was to be abandoned, which in practice meant that a Soviet deputy minister of defense would no longer be the Pact's commander in chief and that perhaps the Supreme Joint Command would be dissolved; the member states would gain control of their own national forces in conformity with the principle of full national sovereignty; and for the duration of the existence of multilateral institutions representatives of the member states would fill positions by rotation. Nothing, however, was said of a possible dissolution of the Pact.

To use the convenient metaphor of departing trains again, this time the Soviet political leadership had not only firmly positioned itself on the Warsaw Pact reform train but was in the driver's seat. However, as it recognized to its dismay, most of the member countries of that organization, while ostensibly negotiating reform, at the same time were preparing to leave that train.[1625] Above all, the new governments in two of the four countries where Soviet troops were stationed, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, made it clear early on that they wanted the Soviet forces out as quickly as possible.[1626] Gorbachev acceded to these demands. In both cases the withdrawal negotiations dealt almost exclusively with the logistics of the pullout of Soviet forces, not with the principle of their withdrawal. Although Soviet negotiators insinuated that unilateral withdrawals would adversely affect the Warsaw Pact's negotiation position at the CFE talks in

1624 Text of the declaration as published in *Pravda*, 8 June 1990.

1625 Interview with Shakhnazarov.

1626 The account of the Warsaw Pact's demise is based on Douglas L. Clarke, 'Soviet Troop Withdrawals from Eastern Europe', *Report on Eastern Europe* (Munich, Radio Liberty / Radio Free Europe), 30 March 1990, pp. 43-44. Another detailed and well documented analysis is Daniel N. Nelson, 'Watching the Pact Unravel: The Transformation of East European Political-Military Policies', Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien (Cologne), Research Report, No. 32 (1990).

Vienna, they made no serious effort to try to retain a residual force. During President Václav Havel's visit to Moscow in late February, the Czechoslovak and Soviet foreign ministers signed an agreement calling for the bulk of the Central Group of Forces to be out of Czechoslovakia by the end of May 1990 and for all of the troops and equipment to be withdrawn no later than the end of June 1991. On 9 March, Hungarian and Soviet negotiators concluded an agreement that stipulated the same final withdrawal date for the Southern Group of Forces, that is, June 1991. As these negotiations and the Two Plus Four talks progressed, the Polish government revised its position on the German danger and also began calling for the withdrawal of Soviet forces.

These developments put the Soviet Union in an awkward position. In the preceding era, its armed forces had fulfilled important political and strategic functions, foremost, to maintain its vassals in power and safeguard the empire against external threats. In the form of status of forces agreements, their presence had some legal justification. But after the revolutions of 1989 in Central Europe, these rationales no longer existed: the socio-economic systems changed fundamentally; NATO officially and *de facto* was no longer regarded as a threat; and the legal basis of the presence of Soviet troops was put in doubt. The repercussions of these developments on the Soviet forces in Germany were considerable. If the Northern, Central, and Southern Groups of Forces were to be withdrawn, the Western Group of Forces in Germany would find itself in a militarily untenable position: its supply lines would be cut. Furthermore, after the 18 March elections, these forces would find themselves in a political environment that would make them an unwanted anachronism. Moscow would also be pushed into another race against time. Agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on the level of their forces in Europe could enshrine the legitimacy of the Soviet military presence, perhaps even an equal number of forces of the two superpowers, and the continued existence of the Warsaw Pact. But the pressures from the Central and Eastern European countries for a speedy *unilateral* withdrawal of the Soviet forces and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, regardless of developments in NATO, threatened to render obsolete any such agreement. This race against time can be demonstrated in reference to the negotiations on the level of Soviet and American forces in Europe.

At the beginning of February, in his State of the Union address, Bush had proposed limits of 195,000 American and Soviet troops in Central Europe, which he defined as embracing West Germany, the Benelux coun-

tries, Denmark, and all of Eastern Europe except Romania and Bulgaria. The proposal also envisaged retention of 30,000 American troops at the 'flanks', that is, in countries like Britain and Turkey. Gorbachev's counter-proposal reflected completely unrealistic notions about the future level of Soviet forces in Europe. It rejected any asymmetry in the level of Soviet and American forces and stipulated that both the USSR and the USA reduce their troops in Europe to either 195,000 or 225,000 each.[1627] But where did the Soviet political and military leaders expect this enormous number of Soviet forces to be stationed? Which governments, did they think, would be prepared to agree even to a token presence of Soviet troops? In 1990, except for allusions to on-going negotiations with NATO and within the Warsaw Pact, no answer was given in Moscow to these pertinent questions. This also applied to the events of mid-May, when Moscow halted the withdrawal of forces from East Germany. (By that time two Soviet tank divisions and other military units had been pulled back.) A Soviet foreign ministry spokesman merely explained that 'a further decision on questions connected with the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the GDR will depend on the results of the Vienna talks on the reduction of conventional armaments in Europe and a political solution to the German question'.[1628]

The results obtained after difficult negotiations in Vienna, codified in the Paris CFE agreement on 19 November 1990, skilfully sidestepped the issue of whether the Warsaw Pact would continue to exist. Although the agreement *de facto* embodied the bloc-to-bloc structure of the Cold War and the military alliances were called upon to decide among themselves how to apportion cuts in the treaty-limited equipment, it was multilateral in nature and divided the signatories into *Groups*, thereby avoiding the term alliance. The agreement, therefore, was not prejudicial to the continued existence of the alliances. Simply put, the CFE agreement was designed to survive the possible dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. Furthermore, the zones of reduction that were devised and the ceilings for Soviet and American forces that were set would make a complete withdrawal of

1627 Thomas L. Friedman, 'Gorbachev Accepts Deep Cuts in Europe if Forces Are Equal', and Michael R. Gordon, 'A Troop-Cut Assent: Gorbachev Accepts Vital Part of Plan by Bush to Reduce Forces in Europe', *New York Times*, 10 February 1990.

1628 The explanation was provided by foreign ministry spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov, TASS International Service, in Russian, 17 May 1990.

Soviet forces from Eastern Europe feasible while allowing the continued presence of American forces in Western Europe.[1629]

If the Warsaw Pact could perhaps be reformed and at least temporarily be preserved as a political organization, changes in the *Western* military alliance were indispensable from Gorbachev's perspective. If not the reality, at least the semblance of change was necessary to facilitate his task of justifying Soviet consent to Germany's NATO membership. Specifically, an appropriate response was required to the Warsaw Pact summit meeting's call for 'constructive cooperation' between the two blocs and a Europe 'without artificial barriers and ideological hostility'.[1630] The reply was duly provided in the declaration adopted by NATO's summit conference in London on 6 July. The Atlantic alliance, according to the declaration, extended the 'hand of friendship' to the countries of the East. NATO was ready 'to enhance the political component of our Alliance'; to intensify military contacts with 'Moscow and other Central and East European capitals'; to field, after the conclusion of the CFE negotiations, 'smaller and restructured active forces'; to move 'away from "forward defense"' and to reduce its 'reliance on nuclear weapons'.[1631]

In view of the Kremlin's sharp turn to anti-Western rhetoric and policies starting in earnest at the beginning of Putin's third term in office as president in May 2012, including charges that the West had invariably been hostile to Russia and that the collapse of the Soviet Union had essentially being engineered by the Western intelligence agencies, first and foremost the CIA, it is appropriate to draw a *balance sheet* of Moscow's gains and losses. In particular, the question needs to be addressed as to whether the agreements on German unification and united Germany's membership in NATO, as outlined in basic form in Moscow and Arkhyz, refined in the Two Plus Four negotiations and codified on 12 September in the Final Settlement, constitute the best possible deal from the Soviet perspective, or

1629 Richard A. Falkenrath, *Shaping Europe's Military Order: The Origins and Consequences of the CFE Treaty*, Center for Science and International Affairs (CSIA), John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995), pp. 54-61, 76-77; Jonathan Dean and Randall Watson Forsberg, 'CFE and Beyond: The Future of Conventional Arms Control', *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1992), pp. 76-121; Jeffrey D. McCausland, *Conventional Arms Control and European Security*, Adelphi Paper 301 (London: IISS, 1996), p. 14.

1630 Communiqué of the PCC's Moscow meeting, *Pravda*, 8 June 1990.

1631 Text of the London declaration of NATO, *New York Times*, 7 July 1990.

whether they violated basic Soviet and therefore, *mutatis mutandis*, Russian security interests.

The Balance Sheet: Defeat or 'Win-Win'?

Answers to the question of whether the Final Settlement served or violated Soviet security interests depend on the yardstick of assessment. Should the frame of reference consist of principles of the New Political Thinking and Euro-Atlantic cooperation or be based on the traditional Imperial and Ideological paradigm, Eurasianist concepts and Russian Great Power images? Using the former yardstick of evaluation, the Soviet Union on balance gained a lot.

- It was finally able to rid itself of an empire that was politically nonviable and economically inefficient and that could only be preserved by means of recurrent military intervention.
- The country was no longer saddled with the task of having to maintain the division of Germany through the threat or the use of force but was free to construct an entirely new, cooperative relationship with the new Germany.
- The policies of unified Germany would be more predictable since it would remain firmly anchored in Western institutions, including the European Economic Community and the Western military alliance.
- NATO had committed itself to structural reforms and to abandoning its previous anti-Soviet political and military orientation, permitting the Soviet Union to scale down its armament efforts and concentrate on internal reform.
- To the extent that NATO could still be considered a military competitor in Europe, the problem was mitigated by the fact that foreign armed forces and nuclear weapons or their carriers would not be stationed in the former East Germany.
- The risk of a new security threat in Europe was obviated or at least significantly lessened by unified Germany's NATO membership; the presence of American forces in that country and in Europe; limitation of Germany's armed forces to 370,000 servicemen; and the German government's re-affirmation that it would not produce or possess nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

An assessment of the settlement on the basis of the traditional Soviet and current Russian Great Power paradigm, of course, yields entirely different results.

– The Soviet Union and, by extension, Russia suffered a disastrous defeat in the competition with the United States and Germany, losing its traditional sphere of influence in Europe and exposing itself yet again to the risk of the emergence of a powerful Germany in Europe.
– The negotiations were conducted unprofessionally and in complete ignorance of military affairs, the officials responsible needlessly consented to a fundamental shift in the balance of power, committing the Soviet Union to large-scale asymmetrical reductions and the unilateral dismantling of its force posture in Europe.
– These negotiators missed the opportunity to provide for a neutralized and demilitarized Germany and thereby squandered the chances of constructing a new European security system without military blocs.
– They agreed instead to a significant strengthening of NATO by abandoning the GDR and handing that country over to the adversary; endorsed the continued stationing of foreign troops and nuclear weapons on West German soil; consented to an excessively high number of German conventional forces as part of NATO's integrated command structure; accepted at face value unilateral NATO commitments that could be rescinded at any time and at that organization's convenience; and failed to provide safeguards against a further NATO expansion eastward.

To provide the flavour of the conservative criticism of the Final Settlement, it is useful to refer again to Akhromeev and Kornienko. They write that Gorbachev, his associates and advisors, and Shevardnadze essentially used three arguments in their attempt at justifying their consent to what they only yesterday had called unthinkable and a violation of the global balance of power. First, at its London summit, NATO had adopted a declaration to the effect that the alliance would transform itself into an organization emphasizing its political character and re-examine its military doctrine. Second, the West German chancellor had pledged that a unified Germany would not deploy foreign troops on the soil of the former GDR and would not to allow the stationing of nuclear weapons there. Third, he had also committed Germany to a ceiling of 370 000 officers and men for Germany's armed forces, meaning that the total number of troops would be

only half the size of the combined forces of the FRG and the GDR before unification.[1632]

In their rebuttal of the first argument, Akhromeev and Kornienko state that 'time keeps moving and the promises of a re-evaluation of the organization of NATO still remain nothing more than projects, while at the same time the Warsaw Pact has ceased to exist altogether and Soviet military doctrine was redesigned three years before the London NATO summit meeting. Consequently, the restructuring of the Soviet military forces has commenced and is proceeding right now.' They then quote Gorbachev telling Genscher on 18 March 1991 that 'we do not see much of a transformation of NATO from the perspective of the formulation of an all-European security system. What is being discussed is rather a strengthening of the security structures for those who belong to the [Western military] organization.'[1633]

In refutation of the second argument, they acknowledge that not deploying foreign troops and nuclear weapons on the territory of East Germany was, of course, advantageous for the USSR. But in the context of the self-dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the withdrawal of Soviet forces not only from East Germany but also from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, one could not fail to raise the following question: why, under these conditions must foreign forces and nuclear weapons remain on the territory of *West* Germany? This question, they write, has been asked not only in the Soviet Union. Egon Bahr, for instance, put it the following way: 'Honestly speaking, I am amazed at Gorbachev's consent to the inclusion of a united Germany in NATO. I was [also] surprised that the fate of nuclear weapons was not touched upon. You can say that NATO has achieved a tremendous victory.'[1634]

In their criticism of the third alleged advantage derived from the Soviet Union from the Final Settlement, they assert that it was logically unsustainable to maintain that the limitation of the size of the German forces to 370 000 officers and men was fair to the Soviet Union because the limitation constituted a reduction to half the combined armed strength of the East and West German armed forces before German unification. Previous-

1632 Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata*, pp. 260-61.

1633 *Pravda*, 19 March 1991, as quoted by Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata*, p. 261.

1634 *Pravda*, 19 July 1990, as quoted by Akhromeev and Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata*, p. 261.

ly, these two armies existed on opposite sides of the barricade. It had been inappropriate, therefore, to combine them for the purpose of calculating respective gains and losses. Logic would have demanded that the number of forces of the East German forces (173,000) be subtracted from the number of forces of the Bundeswehr (previously 495,000). This would have meant to settle on no more than 322,000 officers and men for the armed forces of the new Germany rather than the 370,000 agreed upon.[1635]

The central focus of the conservative criticism, however, are not on the details of the Final Settlement but the principle of unified Germany's membership in NATO. Akhromeev, Kornienko, Kvitsinsky, Falin, Bondarenko than and many other previous Soviet and current Russian government officials and members of the military establishment thought and still believe today that a neutral Germany would have served Soviet and Russian security interests better than a Germany in NATO. On balance, however, it stands to reason that the latter solution was far more advantageous for the new Russia as well as for Germany and her European neighbours. To that extent, it can be regarded as a 'Win-Win' outcome. Gorbachev ultimately came to see it that way. When the question was put to Chernyaev as to what convinced his chief to opt for this solution, his reply concerning specific modalities of German NATO membership were Baker's nine points or incentives. On more basic principles, he mentioned two considerations. (1) Gorbachev was impressed by the reasoning that a neutral Germany could, and one day might, seek access to nuclear weapons. (2) 'The West had the better arguments.'[1636]

To conclude the discussion of the security dimensions of German unification, it is appropriate to return to another major contention that forms part of the current Russian anti-Western narrative about her national interests, that is, whether Western leaders reneged on 'clear commitments', 'firm guarantees' and 'categorical assurances' not to enlarge NATO beyond the borders of the former East Germany.

1635 Ibid., p. 262. Akhromeev and Kornienko were in all likelihood conscious of what Shevardnadze had said. On 3 July 1990, evidently in anticipation of the Moscow and Arkhyz accords, he had asked the delegates to the Twenty-eighth CPSU Congress: 'What is better for us? To deal with a Bundeswehr of the FRG that comprises half a million men or, say, an army that is half that size of a united Germany?'

1636 Interview with Chernyaev.

The Myth of the NATO 'Guarantee' Not to Embark on Eastern Enlargement

Former Soviet and current Russian officials have repeatedly asserted that the West *did* give unambiguous assurances to the effect that there would be no NATO eastward expansion. One of the prime witnesses for the prosecution of the case is Gorbachev:

> [Chancellor] Kohl, US foreign minister James Baker and others *assured me that NATO would not move one centimetre to the east*. The Americans did not stick to it [that commitment], and the Germans didn't care. Perhaps they even rubbed their hands [and celebrated] how skilfully one had pulled the Russians over the table. But what did it lead to? The result has been that now the Russians no longer trust Western assurances.[1637]

Chernyaev, his foreign policy advisor, concurred with his chief,[1638] as have many Russian officials far too numerous to be quoted here.[1639] The most noteworthy and politically most relevant repetitions of the 'firm commitments' claim are those disseminated by Putin. This applies first and foremost to his speech at the 43rd Munich Security Conference on 10 February 2007. He called NATO expansion a 'serious provocation' and went on to ask:

> What happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even

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1637 Gorbachev in an interview with the German mass circulation tabloid *Bild Zeitung*, 'Die Deutschen waren nicht aufzuhalten', *Bild.de*, 2 April 2009, http://www.bild.de/politik/2009/bild-medienpreis/die-deutschen-waren-nicht-aufzuhalten-7864098.bild.html (italics mine).

1638 Chernyaev, for instance, at the annual meeting of the Göttinger Arbeitskreis, in Mainz, 4-6 May 1995, where he promised proof of the Russian contention in the form of an 800-page documentary collection. Such a collection, however, was never published.

1639 To provide a random sample, advocates of the 'assurances' viewpoint include then deputy defense minister Andrei Kokoshin at the 3-4 February 1996 Munich international security conference, then called *Wehrkundetagung*; for details see Fred Oldenburg, *Deutsche Einheit und Öffnung der NATO*, Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, No. 52 (1996), pp. 5-6; Gennadi Seleznev, then chairman of the State Duma, on a visit to Norway; ITAR-TASS (in Russian), 29 May 1997; and Alexei Pushkov, 'Lidery Zapada ne zderzhali obeshchanii', *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 19 March 1997, at that time ORT's (Russian television) director for its international relations programmes and at present chairman of the Duma's foreign affairs committee.

> remembers them. But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary [Manfred] Wörner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that '*the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee*'. Where are these guarantees?[1640]

Some Western officials have supported such contentions. US ambassador to Moscow Matlock, for instance, who was present at the talks between Baker and Gorbachev as well as with Shevardnadze on 9 February 1990 and took notes, averred that Gorbachev received a 'clear commitment that if Germany united, and stayed in NATO, the borders of NATO would not move eastward'.[1641] Western scholars have accepted this version and claimed that at the Ottawa 'Open Skies' meeting the Western foreign ministers had 'agreed not to extend NATO to the east and to let the Soviets know that the Western alliance would not accept the former Warsaw Pact states as members in NATO'.[1642]

The chief witness for the NATO 'firm commitment' case, however, is on record not only as having reiterated the claim but also as having stated the very opposite. In an interview with the Russian government newspaper *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, Gorbachev corrected earlier statements of his and clarified:

> *The subject of 'NATO expansion' [in 1989-1990] was not discussed at all*, *it was not raised in these years*. I say that with a full [sense of] responsibility. Not a single East European country touched upon this question, not even after the Warsaw Pact ceased to exist in 1991. The Western leaders also did not raise it.[1643]

1640 Putin, Speech at the 43rd Munich Security Conference, *Securityconference.de*, 10 February 2007, http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2007=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=de&id=179& (italics mine).

1641 House Committee on International Relations, U.S. Policy toward NATO Enlargement: Hearing, 104th Cong., 2nd sess., June 20, 1996, p. 31. Matlock reiterated this position in conversation with the author in Cambridge, Mass. on 10 February 1997.

1642 Szabo, *The Diplomacy of German Unification*, p. 64, based on an article in *Der Spiegel*, No. 9, 26 February 1990, p. 21. In contrast to Szabo, Michael Mandelbaum, another American analyst, uncritically accepts this contention as fact; see his *The Dawn of Peace in Europe* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1996), p. 63.

1643 'Mikhail Gorbachev: Ya protiv liubykh sten', *Rg.ru*, 16 October 2014, http://www.rg.ru/2014/10/15/gorbachev.html.

Ambassador Matlock, too, corrected himself. In an article commissioned by the Russian newspaper *Komsomolskaia pravda*, as quoted in part above, he stated:

> All the discussions in 1990 regarding the expansion of NATO jurisdiction were *in the context of what would happen to the territory of the GDR*. There was still a Warsaw Pact. Nobody was talking about NATO and the countries of Eastern Europe. However, the language used did not always make that specific.[1644]

This is indeed the crux of the matter. The propagators and propagandists of the 'firm commitments' myth, either ignorant of the facts or deliberately, fail to make that important distinction. When Baker on 9 February assured Gorbachev that if Germany were to remain part of NATO, 'there would be no extension of NATO's jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east', it is clear from the context that 'east' meant East Germany.

Furthermore, any ambiguity how far eastward NATO 'jurisdiction' was to extend was dispelled on 24 February in the Bush-Kohl meeting at Camp David: unified Germany would be a full member of NATO and NATO would thereby move eastward but there would be a special military status for the former East Germany. That stance, amply reconstructed here, was immediately made public; presented directly to Gorbachev by Baker in Moscow on 18 May, by Bush on 31 May in Washington, and by Kohl on 15-16 July in Moscow and Arkhyz; discussed at length and in detail in the Two Plus Four negotiations; and codified in the Final Settlement. There is no evidence that further NATO enlargement eastward was dealt with at any time in any of the negotiation formats and forums.[1645]

Putin has to be counted among the propagators and propagandists deliberately bending and falsifying the historical record to suit the Kremlin's

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1644 Matlock, 'Nato Expansion: Was there a Promise?'; see above, pp. 608-9 (italics mine). Matlock repeated that important clarification in correspondence with me on 15 April 2015.

1645 For more detail on the false 'firm commitment' narrative see Mark Kramer, 'The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2009), pp. 39-61. Kramer's article is one of the best researched and most convincing. It also contains a comprehensive review of recently declassified documents relating to the problem. − The same conclusions were reached earlier by Hannes Adomeit, 'Gorbachev's Consent to United Germany's Membership in NATO', in Frederic Bozo *et al*., *Europe and the End of the Cold War: A Reappraisal* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 107-18.

political purposes. This is evident, for instance, in the sophistry of his utilization of NATO General Secretary Wörner's speech in Bremen on 17 May 1990. Wörner had stated:

> The very fact that we are ready not to deploy NATO troops beyond the territory of the Federal Republic [of Germany] gives the Soviet Union firm security guarantees. Moreover we could conceive of a transitional period during which a reduced number of Soviet forces could remain stationed in the present-day GDR.[1646]

A comparison of Wörner's speech with Putin's quotation demonstrates, first, that although Putin correctly provides the date of the speech, he falsely put it into the context of alleged 'assurances our western partners made *after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact*', an event that took place more than one year later.[1647] Second, the Kremlin chief quotes Wörner as stating that 'the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee'. But Wörner did not say that. He did not refer to possible enlargement outside of German territory, that is, deployment of NATO troops east of united Germany but he declared NATO's readiness 'not to deploy NATO troops *beyond the territory of the Federal Republic*'.[1648] That is a crucial difference. Third, what was at issue for Wörner was not NATO enlargement and the stationing of NATO forces east of the Oder and Neisse rivers but a special status for *East Germany.* This is indicated by the sentence that followed immediately after 'security guarantee' and that Putin − evidently for propagandist purposes – conveniently omitted, namely that NATO 'could conceive of a transitional period during which a reduced number of Soviet forces could remain stationed *in the present-day GDR*'.[1649]

That, in conclusion, leaves the question as to why the issue of NATO enlargement east of united Germany did not figure in the negotiations in 1990. It is not difficult to reconstruct the Western rationale. In accordance with CSCE principles, all European nations had the right to choose their own alliances. That was a principle that Baker asserted for Germany at the

1646 'The Atlantic Alliance and European Security in the 1990s. Address by Secretary General, Manfred Wörner to the Bremer Tabaks Collegium', *Nato.int*, 17 May 1990, http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1990/s900517a_e.htm.

1647 Putin, Speech at the 43rd Munich Security Conference (italics mine). The Warsaw Pact was dissolved on 1 July 1991.

1648 Wörner, 'The Atlantic Alliance and European Security' (italics mine).

1649 Ibid. (italics mine).

US-Soviet summit in Washington at the end of May and beginning of June 1990, and one that Gorbachev accepted. Then why should the West declare that principle to be invalid for the ex-Soviet satellite countries in East-Central Europe? That would have meant to resurrect the Brezhnev doctrine of limited sovereignty for countries declared by Moscow to be part of a Russian sphere of influence.

But why did the issue of NATO enlargement east of the Oder and Neisse rivers fail to be raised not only by Gorbachev but also by his conservative critics and the *germanisty*, including Kvitsinsky, Falin and Bondarenko? The answer lies in the fact that, like unified Germany's NATO membership until the spring of 1990, it seemed inconceivable to them that any of the non-Soviet members of the Warsaw Pact in addition to East Germany would one day want to join the Western alliance.[1650] Testifying to the persistence of illusions, they thought, as noted above, that with the removal of Marxist-Leninist ideology and reforms of the Pact, the 'state interests' of these countries and images of a rising and potentially dangerous Germany would prevail and keep them in line.[1651]

This reconstruction of the Soviet consent to unified Germany's membership in NATO and the balance sheet of advantages and disadvantages from Soviet and later Russian perspectives has almost exclusively been focused on political and security dimensions. What is missing is a discussion of economic factors in Gorbachev's decision to consent to Germany's unification and the united country's membership in NATO.

8. The 'Price Tag' of the Consent

In that context, several questions need to be posed. Are the conservative Russian critics correct in contending that Gorbachev traded vital long-term Soviet security interests for short-term economic gain? How well did Soviet negotiators succeed in integrating security and financial issues in one

1650 As so often in 1989-1990, Hungary proved to be the exception. At the end of February 1990, in a conference in Budapest on European security matters, foreign minister Gyula Horn said that 'a new approach is possible in the framework of which one could not even exclude membership of Hungary in NATO'. Horn's prophetic view was reported verbatim on 23 February 1990 by *Vremya*, the main evening newscast, airing on − as it was then known – the First Programme of Central Television of the USSR.

1651 See above, p. 645.

comprehensive negotiating package? Did they, from their own perspective, strike a good bargain? How significant were the sums of money received? These questions can meaningfully be addressed only in the larger context of the economic dimension in the Soviet imperial decline and collapse and what many observers consider to be the most fundamental of all questions: did the economic crisis lie at the root not only of the disintegration of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe but did it determine Gorbachev's consent to German unification and unified Germany's membership in NATO?

The record of Soviet economic performance between 1985 and 1987 may be debatable. It seems that there may even have been some stabilization due to the traditional Soviet approach of administrative streamlining, anti-corruption measures and pressure exerted on the middle levels of the economic bureaucracy from the top.[1652] From 1988 to 1990, however, some of the measures adopted previously and new decisions by the political leadership pulled the economy into a severe downturn, with fateful consequences. The essence of the problem lay in a sharp divergence of the pace of political and economic reform; the conscious curtailment of the party's power in economic decision-making; erosion of the ideological basis on which the party's authority in economic management had rested; the deliberate dismantling of the command bureaucratic system; a disastrous reorganization of the agro-industrial complex; the replacement of the centrally organized supply system by market relations between enterprises and last but not least an anti-alcoholism campaign that played havoc with the state finances. Laudable as the intentions of the political leadership and its economic advisers may have been, the consequences of the reform measures were enormous. They included a decline in output; the disruption of the supply system; severe shortages in consumer goods and agricultural products; significant differentials in state and market prices; budget and foreign trade deficits; the destabilization of fiscal and monetary relations; the re-emergence of barter trade; and widening queues and strikes in the mining and transportation industries. The government made attempts to counter negative developments in the nascent private economic

1652 The argument made in this and the next paragraph closely follows Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich, 'Overview', in Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich., eds., *The Disintegration of the Soviet Economic System* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-39, and Vladimir Kontorovich, 'The Economic Fallacy', *The National Interest*, Vol. 31 (Spring 1993), pp. 35-44.

sector by introducing rationing and giving sweeping powers to the KGB and the police to combat purported profiteering and an increasingly powerful mafia. These and other measures, however, were to no avail. As Western economists concluded, the collapse of the Soviet economic system was the 'unintended result of a small number of disastrous decisions by a few individuals' who based their actions on 'a mistaken belief in the boundless ability of the traditional system to reform itself' but who, in economic affairs, displayed 'monumental incompetence'.[1653]

What about the subjective dimension of the problem? Was Gorbachev aware of the serious economic problems? And, if so, how did he propose to address them? On 29 January 1990, in what Chernyaev has described as a 'stormy' meeting of the Politburo, one of the main items on the agenda was the economic and fiscal state of affairs of the Soviet Union. Prime minister Ryzhkov introduced the discussion by saying: 'The situation is difficult, if not critical, and continues to worsen. The apex of the crisis of 1989 has not been overcome.'[1654] Planning chief Nikolai Slyunkov confirmed the gloomy appraisal: 'One can no longer call the state of affairs difficult. The people no longer see any way out. And, in fact, there will be [no way out] if the government is incapable of balancing expenditure and revenue.' As a reflection of the continuing stalemate in the top leadership on the central issue of economic reform, Slyunkov advocated an immediate price liberalization and drastic reform measures, many of which later formed part of Grigori Yavlinsky's 500 Days Plan for a rapid transition to a market economy. He was supported by Yakovlev and Medvedev and, in vivid testimony to the depth of the crisis, also by Ligachev. Kryuchkov, however, thought: 'Perhaps we ought to rescind some of the measures [of perestroika].' Gorbachev summarized the discussion by saying that the economic turn promised for 1989 had not been achieved. People would lose confidence. 'We can't go on this way. That concerns everyone in this room. If we go on working like this, our days are numbered. The people will depose us.'[1655]

The impact of such perceptions on Soviet foreign policy was twofold: (1) the leadership's willingness to prop up an economically inefficient empire was even more rapidly being eroded in 1988-90 than in 1985-87; and

1653 Ellman and Kontorovich, 'Overview', p. 32; Kontorovich, 'The Economic Fallacy', p. 44.
1654 Chernyaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym*, p. 332.
1655 Ibid.

(2) not only had any disruptive shocks potentially emanating from the world economy to be avoided but Western economic and financial assistance became part of the political leaders lifeline for their own survival and avoidance of the collapse of the national economy. Requests for such assistance, however, posed painful dilemmas for Gorbachev. In the interest of an effective negotiation stance on the German problem, it was advantageous not to convey the impression that the Soviet Union's bargaining position was exceedingly weak. But failure to raise significant sums of hard currency would surely accelerate the economic crisis, with potentially disastrous political consequences.

The first initiative to alleviate economic and financial stringencies by relying on international assistance was an urgent request to West Germany for food deliveries. On 15 January 1990, ambassador Kvitsinsky asked for a meeting with Teltschik and gave him a list of supplies that were immediately required. The request, perhaps more clearly than anything else, revealed how far the once mighty country had fallen. Significantly for the nexus between economic and political issues, an agreement between Moscow and Bonn about the requested deliveries was signed on 9 February, one day before Kohl's departure for the Soviet capital. West Germany would supply 52,000 tons of canned beef, 50,000 tons of pork, 20,000 tons of butter, 15,000 tons of milk powder and 5,000 tons of cheese as well as clothing and other consumer goods. The deliveries would be subsidized by the federal government with DM 220 million (then about $100 million).[1656] On 10 February, Gorbachev thanked Kohl for the assistance provided, adding – presumably for the reasons mentioned above – that some time ago (when Kvitsinsky had made the request?) matters looked bleak but in the meantime things had changed to the better.[1657]

Although the deliveries agreed upon were designed to deal with short-term supply bottlenecks and involved only relatively small sums of money, the connection between economic issues and German unification involved much more substantial and long-term issues. In the era of the Cold War, whenever West German political leaders and pundits had discussed the question as to how Moscow could ever be persuaded to yield the key to German unification, substantial economic concessions had been considered an indispensable part of a more comprehensive package. Consequent-

1656 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 108, 114; Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 280-81.

1657 Ibid., p. 270.

ly, when Gorbachev visited West Germany in June 1989, Kohl had outlined his vision of a complete rearrangement of Russian-German relations and the conclusion of a Grand Treaty that would integrate political, security and economic dimensions.[1658] Kohl returned to this theme during his visit to Moscow in February 1990. He noted that East Germany, as a principal supplier of manufactured goods to the Soviet Union, was defaulting on its delivery contracts. A unified Germany could do better, he told Gorbachev. It could furnish supplies of a higher quality, more cheaply and more reliably, and it could provide the Soviet Union with access to the market of the European Economic Community.[1659] The German chancellor thereby *de facto* reinforced the advice Gorbachev was receiving from his market-oriented economists, such as Grigory Yavlinsky, Stanislav Shatalin, Nikolai Petrakov, Nikolai Shmelev and Boris Fyodorov, to the effect that large-scale Western involvement was crucial for a revitalization of perestroika. In the summer of 1990, their advice was to take concrete shape in a comprehensive reform programme for the creation of a competitive market economy, mass privatization, prices determined by the market, a large transfer of power from the Union government to the Republics and integration with the world economic system, all of this to be achieved in 500 days – hence the colloquial reference to the plan as the '500 Days Plan'.[1660]

On 4 May the Soviet Union again turned to West Germany for assistance.[1661] Using the occasion of the Two Plus Four meeting in Bonn and acting in accordance with instructions by Gorbachev and Prime Minister Ryzhkov, Shevardnadze explored the possibilities of a government-guar-

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1658 Ibid., pp. 42-44.

1659 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 188. The account of the economic details is based on what Teltschik told American officials after the Moscow talks. They are not contained in Teltschik's and Kohl's memoirs.

1660 The program was proposed by Grigory Yavlinsky and further developed by a group of economic specialists under the direction of Stanislav Shatalin. For a comprehensive analysis see Marie Lavigne, *Financing the Transition: The Shatalin Plan and the Soviet Economy* (New York: Westview, 1990). − In the summer of 1991, Yavlinsky was to return to this plan jointly with Graham Allison of Harvard University to develop the 'Grand Bargain' reform program for Gorbachev's negotiations with the G-7 over financial aid in support of transition to the market.

1661 The account that follows is drawn from Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 221, 226-28, 230-35, and Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, pp. 25-31.

anteed credit. On the following day, Kvitsinsky conveyed the details of the Soviet request, including first and foremost a credit in the amount of DM 20 billion ($12 billion) with a duration of five to seven years. His own reaction to the aid request he had been obliged to transmit is instructive of both the political sensitivity and internal opposition to any trade-off between Western economic assistance and Soviet concessions on unified Germany's membership in NATO. Kvitsinsky deplored the fact that his chief had lent himself to raising the aid issue although 'Shevardnadze had no direct responsibility for economic management in the country'. He also objected to the very principle of the request and criticized those who had told Shevardnadze to submit it. It was clear to him that the credit, if it were to be granted, would be 'eaten up' within a few months. It would provide no impulse to an acceleration of reforms in the Soviet Union because the government simply had no concept as to how to increase exports or gain hard currency, let alone how to lead the country out of the crisis. In Kvitsinsky's view, the conclusion to be drawn was obvious:

> The request for a financial credit could only be the beginning of a long chain of similar pleas, which would lead to ever more humiliations and induce the West to pose ever more disagreeable political demands. ... To have sent off [Shevardnadze] to beg for money meant that we ourselves, whether we intended it or not, were hinting at a *connection between the solution of the German problem and the extension of credit*.[1662]

The West German government, of course, saw such a connection. It was prepared to act upon the request in full consciousness of its political implications, that is, that foreign assistance could help keep Gorbachev in power and could serve to persuade Gorbachev to accept unified Germany's membership in NATO.[1663] Given the sensitivity of the issue, it decided to proceed in secrecy. On 13 May, accompanied by Hilmar Kopper of Deutsche Bank and Wolfgang Röller of Dresdner Bank, Teltschik flew to Moscow on a West German military aircraft. In the morning of the following day, the three held talks in the Kremlin with Ryzhkov, Shevardnadze, deputy prime minister Stepan Sitaryan, Yuri Moskovsky (the chairman of

1662 Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm* p. 25 (italics mine).

1663 In his talks with Bush in Washington and Camp David, Kohl had reportedly said: 'The Soviets are negotiating. But this may end up as a matter of cash. They need the money. ... There will be security concerns for the Soviets if Germany remains in NATO. And they will want to get something in return'; Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 213.

the Bank for Foreign Trade) and Kvitsinsky in his new role as deputy foreign minister with responsibility for European affairs.[1664] In the afternoon, they met separately with Gorbachev in his Kremlin office, with only Ryzhkov and Kvitsinsky present.

Characterizing the first round of meetings, Kvitsinsky observed a difference in the approach of the two sets of participants: whereas the German envoys tried to link financial issues and the German problem, the Soviet participants attempted to *separate* the two issues. Thus, at the outset of what was to be an extensive survey of Soviet economic difficulties, Ryzhkov stated that the Soviet leadership was, of course, paying attention to German unification, but it also imparted great importance to the proper management of economic affairs in the triangular relationship USSR-GDR-FRG. For the purpose of such management, he said, six commissions would be established at the Council of Ministers. Shevardnadze later endeavoured to delink the two dimensions by postulating the preferred Soviet sequence. In an interjection to Teltschik's remark that 'if we are able to come to an agreement today [on economic and financial matters], this will contribute to calming the controversy in the area in which Shevardnadze is conducting negotiations,' he quipped: 'Or vice versa.'[1665]

Ryzhkov justified the Soviet aid request as follows: between 1985 and 1987, economic reforms had been prepared, and in the following two years their implementation had begun. The rigid system of central planning was gradually being abandoned, but neither the infrastructure nor models for a new economic system had as yet been developed. Many problems had arisen, including a disproportion between the volume of money in circulation and the availability of goods. Concerning foreign trade, he deplored that in 1990 the Soviet Union year would have to import 42 million tons grain at the cost of 4.5 billion roubles ($2.7 billion), which constituted 25 percent of the country's hard currency earnings. The chances for an improvement of hard currency earnings were limited be-

1664 Kvitsinsky was charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the West German mission to Moscow would indeed be kept secret. Corresponding measures, to be agreed upon with Teltschik, pertained to the route the plane would be taking to Moscow, non-disclosure of the identity of the members of the German delegation and confidentiality of their reception at the airport. Not even the West German embassy in Moscow was informed of the trip; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 230; Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, p. 25.

1665 Ibid., p. 26

cause of the 'unauthorized' export of raw materials and metals and decreasing prices for oil on the world market. Overall, the country had to overcome a very complicated stage in its development and needed foreign aid. The transition problems could be solved without such assistance but this would mean that the standard of living of the population would have to be lowered, which would imperil not only perestroika but also the future of the Soviet Union. Specifically, he asked West Germany for an unconditional credit in the amount of 1.5 to 2 billion roubles ($900 million to $1.2 billion) to meet current payment requirements. This sum would be part of an overall package of 10 to 15 billion roubles ($6 to $9 billion), to be repaid over ten to fifteen years, with no payment due for five years.[1666]

Gorbachev, in essence, reiterated Ryzhkov's plea for assistance as well as the main line of reasoning that made such assistance necessary.[1667] He, too, spoke of a very complicated transitional stage which the country was experiencing but thought that this phase could be overcome within two to three years. An overall improvement of the economy could be achieved within five to seven years. He considered foreign assistance for the Soviet Union to be a fundamental and strategically important issue. Europe had arrived at a turning point, and it would be parochial pragmatism if attempts were made now to exploit instabilities for egoistic reasons. In obvious allusion to differences in approach between West Germany and the United States on the issue of credit to the Soviet Union, he regretted that Washington was still hesitating and was not conducting a far-sighted policy. As for the total Soviet credit requirement, he thought that what was needed were between 15 and 20 billion roubles ($9 to $12 billion), with a grace period for repayment of about seven or eight years.[1668] Gorbachev, too, eschewed the idea of a specific linkage between economic assistance and Soviet concessions on security issues. Nevertheless, he agreed with Teltschik that it was appropriate to link all issues in a comprehensive treaty to be concluded after the achievement of German unification, with preparatory work to begin immediately. Furthermore, it was at this meeting where Gorbachev not only proposed another Soviet-West German summit – to be held, as he mentioned, *after* the Twenty-eighth CPSU

1666 Ibid., pp. 27-28; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 23-32.

1667 Since Gorbachev's approach was almost identical to that adopted by Ryzhkov, there is no need to repeat it here in detail. Only some important additions will be noted.

1668 Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, pp. 29-30.

Congress – but also responded positively to the German suggestion for the two leaders to meet in the Caucasus.[1669]

What, then, was the fate of Gorbachev's request for West German financial assistance? The Bonn government agreed to provide guarantees for an unconditional bank credit in the amount of up to DM 5 billion ($3 billion). The lack of conditionality, however, applied only to the financial technicalities. Unmistakably, there were political strings attached. As Kohl explained to Gorbachev in a letter on 22 May, the extension of credit required a considerable political effort domestically. He expected, therefore, that the Soviet government, in a spirit of cooperation, would do everything in its power to help settle as yet unresolved issues in the Two Plus Four negotiations. As for additional and more long-term loans, he said that common action of all the Western industrialized countries was necessary and promised to pursue the matter in talks with his partners in the European Community, the G-7 and the Group of 24.[1670]

Despite the urgency of the loan from Moscow's perspective and its perceived political importance in Bonn, it took until early July for the package to be assembled and approved by the two governments. In vivid testimony to the liquidity crisis facing the Soviet Union, the full amount was called up within a week after approval.[1671] However, as Kvitsinsky correctly comments, the credit was quite insufficient to meet the Soviet leadership's objectives of putting the Soviet Union into a position to fulfil its payment obligations and to eradicate concern on the international financial markets about the country's credit standing.[1672] For a larger loan approximating the amounts that Gorbachev had suggested to the German delegation on 14 May, and as Kohl had said in his letter, a more comprehensive international effort of both banks and governments was needed, which would certainly have to include the United States and Japan. In fact, only four days after the Teltschik mission, the Soviet president and party chief repeated his plea for international financial assistance to Baker in Moscow, although now with a focus on the United States and an increase

1669 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 233-34; Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, p. 31.

1670 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 243-44.

1671 Theo Waigel, the West German finance minister, communicated this fact to the chancellor on 13 July; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 316. In the memoir literature (Kohl, Genscher, Teltschik and Kvitsinsky), there is no explanation why it took so long for the credit to be made available.

1672 Kvitsinsky, *Vor dem Sturm*, p. 28.

in the total amount of credit required. The next few years would be critical, he told Baker, because the Soviet Union would move to a market economy. To cushion the impact and expedite the transition, it had to buy consumer goods and invest in the conversion of defense industry to civilian production. To cover the costs of imports and structural change, it needed hard-currency credits in the amount of $20 billion.[1673]

West Germany, mainly for incontrovertible political reasons, was prepared to participate in an international assistance effort and, more specifically, be instrumental in the establishment of an international banking consortium to finance Soviet requirements. However, the political impediments to such an approach were daunting. Neither the Japanese government nor Japanese banks would subscribe to it for as long as Moscow failed to make concessions on the Kurile Islands or Northern Territories issue (more of this later).[1674] As for the United States, as Bush told Kohl on 17 May in Washington, his hands were tied because of the Baltic problem. Given the pressure tactics Gorbachev had adopted toward Lithuania, including an economic blockade, and opposition in Congress, neither most-favoured-nation status (MFN) nor large American loans could be granted. Bush also maintained that the Soviet Union would be unable to repay substantial loans.[1675]

The American president adhered to that position at the Soviet-American summit. He wanted to help, Bush told Gorbachev, but American credits at this stage would not be forthcoming. The right conditions had to be created first. What was needed were more far-reaching economic reforms, ending pressure on Lithuania, a reduction of Soviet subsidies to Cuba and − last but not least − progress on the German problem. The only concession he was willing to make was the promise that the G-7 summit meeting, scheduled to take place in Houston from 9 to 11 July, would consider the possibilities of a multilateral assistance program.[1676] As for American trade benefits, including MFN, as Gorbachev observed in retrospect, 'of all the agreements concerning the further development of our relations, none was more bitterly fought over than the planned trade treaty'.[1677] The major obstacle here, in addition to those previously mentioned, were the

1673 Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 249.
1674 See below, pp. 680-82.
1675 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 237-38.
1676 Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, p. 282.
1677 Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 2, p. 183.

continuing restrictions on the emigration of Soviet Jews and the failure of the Supreme Soviet to adopt a liberal emigration law. Emigration had been the issue that had led to the collapse of the 1972 Foreign Trade Act in the fall of 1974 and contributed to the demise of détente. In 1990, the linkage between the two issues remained as close as ever. Both Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were emotional on the conclusion of a trade treaty, the latter exclaiming at one point to Baker: 'I've rarely spoken like this with you, but it's *extremely important* that this be done.'[1678] Bush finally relented and consented to signing the treaty but not without having clarified first that the ultimate fate of the act would depend on Moscow adopting the emigration law and lifting the economic blockade on Lithuania.[1679]

To return to the issue of a multilateral aid package, on 11 June, in another letter to Kohl, Gorbachev formalized his request for such a package to be assembled and asked the chancellor to use his good offices for that purpose.[1680] At the 25-26 June EC summit in Dublin, Kohl obliged and was supported by Mitterrand. British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, however, objected. She did not want Western money to become 'an oxygen tent for the survival of much of the old system' and found the lack of serious economic analysis at the summit appalling, arguing that 'no board of directors of a company would ever behave in such an unbusinesslike way'.[1681] The criticism was, in essence, well founded: neither had a serious study been made nor had a plan been developed in West Germany (or as yet in the Soviet Union) to ascertain how the $15-20 billion Gorbachev had suggested would be used so that they would effectively contribute to the restructuring of the Soviet economy; the *political* rationale for an international loan package was seen as more important in Bonn. The split in the Western position did not augur well for the Houston summit of the G-7. In fact, the divisions were replicated there. Whereas the European

1678 Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, p. 218 (emphasis in original); on the trade and emigration issues see also ibid., pp. 222-23.

1679 Ibid., p. 223; Zelikow and Rice, *Unified Germany*, p. 281. Gorbachev has correctly said in retrospect that 'the first demand, [passage of] the emigration law, presented no big problem. ... But Lithuania was a different problem'; Gorbachev, *Zhizn'*, Vol. 2, p. 183.

1680 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 397; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 265. On 4 July, Gorbachev also sent a similar letter to Bush in his capacity as chairman of the G-7 summit meeting in Houston, reiterating his plea for international financial and economic assistance for the Soviet Union; ibid., p. 304.

1681 Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, pp. 762-63.

members, except Britain, argued for a speedy multilateral effort, the United States, Canada, and Japan were reluctant. As a result and as so often in such cases of disagreement, the resolution of the problem was postponed and transferred to the IMF, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for further study.[1682]

To review the state of affairs prior to the Soviet-German negotiations in Moscow and Arkhyz in mid-July, the Soviet Union had, on balance, been unsuccessful in its attempt to involve the Western industrialized countries in a comprehensive program to underpin perestroika. An international banking consortium for that purpose had failed to materialize. To the extent that aid or aid commitments existed, they were bilateral and scarce, and extended by countries like France and Italy, whose financial assistance potential was limited. Japanese assistance was blocked by the Kurile Islands issue. The only country with major resources that was both able and willing to help was West Germany. But what were its commitments thus far? In January, the government in Bonn had subsidized the export of foodstuffs and clothing with DM 220 million; in early July, it had approved federal guarantees for a bank credit in the amount of DM 5 billion; in the same month, it had expressed its willingness to honour the economic obligations the GDR had assumed vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, at an uncertain cost; and it had agreed to meet the East German financial obligations for the stationing of Soviet forces for the year 1990, at an estimated cost of 1.4 billion marks.[1683] By any measure of comparison and, in particular, relative to West Germany's large hard-currency reserves, the sums involved can be said to have been between miserly and modest. But if Gorbachev intended to establish a firm *quid pro quo* between Soviet consent to unified Germany's membership in NATO and large-scale West German economic and financial aid, and drive a hard bargain, the opportunity to do so presented itself at the Soviet-West German summit. The opportunity, however, essentially was not used.

In fact, it is astounding how little was said about economic and financial matters at the summit. There was hardly any discussion of specific figures. This applies not only to the exchanges among the top political leaders but also to the talks at the ministerial level. Kohl assured Gorbachev that the common theme at the European Council in Dublin, NATO

1682 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 416-18; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 306-10; Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 829-30.

1683 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 279.

in London and the G-7 in Houston had been the idea that the processes of reform in the Soviet Union had to be supported.[1684] He reiterated the theme that to him economic and financial cooperation was an integral part of the total package. Gorbachev spoke about the great economic opportunities that existed for *West Germany* in the Soviet Union and said that the USSR was not concerned about economic dependency. He also expressed his gratitude for the DM 5 billion loan that West Germany had extended. Ryzhkov then raised three specific issues. (1) He said that some solution had to be found for the 370 economic framework agreements concluded between the GDR and the USSR – a point readily conceded by the German participants who said that the unified Germany would honour East Germany's economic obligations. (2) He also introduced the point, to which Gorbachev later returned, that Germany should contribute beyond 1990 to the financing of Soviet troops transitionally stationed in the eastern part of Germany.[1685] (3) Finally, Ryzhkov advanced claims for compensation for Soviet assets in the GDR, mentioning a figure of DM 20 billion – a figure that was immediately rejected by the German finance minister as unacceptable. Kohl only promised that the issue could be raised in later negotiations.[1686] Sitaryan, in separate discussions with Waigel in Moscow, explored the possibilities of further unconditional financial credits and was brushed off by the latter with the explanation that German credits could not be increased infinitely; that an international aid effort was needed; and that all short-term payment problems should be referred to the IMF.[1687] In Arkhyz, in the early morning hours, the Soviet deputy prime minister made another attempt to discuss with the German finance

1684 This account is based on Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 319-42; Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 421-44; Theo Waigel and Manfred Schell, *Tage, die Deutschland und die Welt veränderten: Vom Mauerfall zum Kaukasus. Die deutsche Währungsunion* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1994), pp. 26-56: and interviews of this author with Teltschik.

1685 Ryzhkov also gave some indication as to the likely costs that might arise, saying that the Soviet Union had previously paid for the stationing costs with the equivalent of 6 million tons of oil. After the establishment of the economic and financial union between the two Germanys on 1 July 1990 and the necessity for Moscow to pay in hard currency, the equivalent volume had risen to an estimated 11 million tons; Waigel and Schell, *Tage,* pp. 37, 45.

1686 Waigel and Schell, *Tage*, p. 46; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 337.

1687 Waigel and Schell, *Tage*, p. 31.

minister specific sums for German financial commitments across various dimensions; this attempt, too, was unsuccessful.[1688]

To summarize the various fragments of discussion in Moscow and Arkhyz, there was agreement on several principles. West Germany should play a major role in the reconstruction of the Soviet economy; honour the GDR's economic agreements with the USSR; embark upon negotiations on compensation for Soviet assets in the GDR; contribute to the financing of Soviet troops stationed in East Germany for the transition period until their complete withdrawal; and help pay for the resettlement of the Soviet military officers in their homeland. As for the mechanics and machinery of addressing these problems, two agreements were to be negotiated, one on the transitional presence of the Soviet armed forces, the other on the modalities of their withdrawal. Specific figures for the financing of the Soviet forces' transitional presence, withdrawal and reintegration would be integrated into the two treaties.[1689]

Apart from the rather unspecific and indeterminate treatment of the economic and financial issues in Moscow and Arkhyz, another anomaly was the delay that occurred until serious negotiations were finally to begin. It was not until 23-24 August that finance officials Sitaryan and Waigel met in Moscow for a first round of talks, with the second round taking place on 3-4 September in Bonn.[1690] The negotiations were rife with controversy, with the final figures left unresolved until high-level intervention. One of the controversial issues discussed was the significant deficit in Soviet-East German trade, expressed in so-called 'transferable roubles', an artificial unit of account and the very antithesis of transferable currency. Sitaryan argued that the imbalance had been caused by the preferential conditions accorded to the GDR in its trade with the Soviet Union, foremost the low

1688 Ibid., p. 49.

1689 The two agreements were concluded on 9 October 1990; see *Abkommen zwischen der Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Regierung der Union der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepubliken über einige überleitende Maßnahmen* and *Vertrag ... über die Bedingungen des befristeten Aufenthalts und die Modalitäten des planmäßigen Abzugs der sowjetischen Truppen aus dem Gebiet der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Press- und Information Office of the Federal Government, *Bulletin*, No. 123, 17 October 1990, pp. 1281-1300.

1690 The account of the negotiations draws on Waigel and Schell, *Tage*, pp. 53-55. For a discussion of the difficulties in reaching agreement on the various economic and financial issues, see 'Bonn und Moskau uneins über finanzielle Hilfe beim Truppenabzug', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 September 1990.

prices for oil. Waigel countered this explanation by saying that East German commodities had been undervalued in the bilateral trade. The total figure for Soviet indebtedness to the GDR was, therefore, unknown but likely to rise in the remaining months of 1990 as a result of (1) a substantial decrease in Soviet-East German trade as a result of the Soviet economic crisis; (2) the rise in export prices charged by East German firms and now to be paid by Soviet importers in hard currency; and (3) a slackening of demand in the eastern part of Germany for Soviet commodities. The two sides again shelved the solution of the issue, agreeing only to establish precise figures of the Soviet trade debt at the end of the year and, by 30 June 1991, to express it in a hard currency equivalent.[1691]

A second problem to be addressed were the costs for the transitional stationing of the Soviet forces. Waigel's proposal to agree upon a total sum for 1991 to 1994 was rejected. Sitaryan demanded instead DM 2.5 billion for 1991 alone – a sum that was allegedly based on the number of forces that would still be on German soil after partial troop withdrawals in that year. That figure, in turn, was rejected as too high by the German finance minister. He also argued that, if Moscow were to agree to lower figures for the stationing of troops, funds would be freed up for other purposes. Resolution of this matter, too, was postponed.[1692]

A third issue were the costs for the withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces. The Soviet side envisaged sums in amount of DM 2 to 3 billion, based on Comecon prices, for the transportation of the troops to the Soviet border. The German negotiators rejected in principle covering transportation costs but were prepared to provide and pay for 'technical assistance', such as supplying container vessels and services of the German railways.[1693]

A final issue was payment of the costs for the resettlement of the officers and non-commissioned of the Soviet forces in their homeland. The

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1691 In October 1990, the trade debt of the USSR with the GDR at the end of 1990 was estimated by the German government to amount to 5 billion transfer roubles (TR), or DM 11.70 (at an exchange rate of 1 TR = DM 2.34); 'Der Osthandel der ehemaligen DDR bricht zusammen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 November 1990. In negotiations conducted between Moscow and Bonn in 1991, it turned out that the Soviet Union wanted to pay as little as possible of its trade debt, preferably nothing at all; see 'Bonn pocht auf Guthaben in Transferrubel,' ibid, 10 July 1991.

1692 Waigel and Schell, *Tage*, p. 54.

1693 Ibid.

Soviet negotiators wanted the German contribution to a resettlement programme to be based on the volume of housing necessary for 72,000 officers, with Bonn covering the requirements of half of that total number. They suggested comprehensive investments in the infrastructure of housing compounds, with projects in almost twenty Soviet cities, including Minsk, Kiev, Rostov and Odessa. From the German perspective, the geographical area and the likely cost slated for infrastructure and housing construction was likely to be enormous and excessive. Waigel, therefore, suggested a financial ceiling to be put on the total cost. No agreement was reached on such a ceiling.[1694]

On 5 September, presumably in response to the obvious disagreements and deadlock on issues of principle and specific costs, the new ambassador in West Germany, Vladislav Terekhov, presented a huge bill to the West German government. The bill included (1) contributions to the cost of the stationing of the Western Group of Forces in the period from 1991 through 1994 in the amount of DM 3.5 billion; (2) payment of transportation costs for the withdrawal of Soviet forces amounting to DM 3 billion; (3) a share in the construction of 72,000 apartments, including a supporting infrastructure consisting of kindergartens, shops and pharmacies, at a sum total of DM 11.5 billion; (4) the financing of retraining schemes for returning officers and non-commissioned officers and their integration in the Soviet economy at DM 500 million; and (5) compensation for Soviet assets in the GDR in the sum of DM 17 billion to DM 17.5 billion. The grand total of this bill as an integral part of the German settlement amounted to about DM 36 billion. All of that money was directly related to the transitional stationing, withdrawal and resettlement of the Soviet forces only. It did not include any money for other purposes. And the sum stood in stark contrast to what Germany was willing to pay, namely DM 6 billion, which was to be used primarily for the construction of housing.[1695] Nothing was mentioned about Soviet assets, with another huge bill presumably still to be presented unless the USSR chose to follow the precedents established in its negotiations with Hungary and Poland, which provided that the costs of environmental clean-up would be offset against the presumed value of the military installations.

1694 Ibid.
1695 Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 357-58.

The large gap between the Soviet and the German figures was both a mutual embarrassment and a practical problem that urgently needed to be dealt with. The gap was bridged in what must probably be ranked as two of the most expensive telephone conversations in Soviet-German history. In a first telephone conversation with Gorbachev on September 7, the German chancellor suggested a total of DM 8 billion. Gorbachev reacted harshly and said that DM 11 billion would be required for housing construction alone. He also now, at that late stage, *directly linked possible Soviet concessions in the (final stages of the) Two Plus Four negotiations with sums to be obtained from Germany*. He was unsure what instructions he should give to Shevardnadze in these negotiations. 'For me', he explained, 'the situation is alarming. I have the impression that I have fallen into a trap.'[1696] The telephone conversation ended without a resolution of the problem and with the German chancellor merely suggesting to talk again three days later. In the telephone conversation on 10 September, Gorbachev was more conciliatory, saying that he did not want to haggle about figures, but he still considered Kohl's counteroffer of DM 11 to DM 12 billion inadequate. He added that, after all, German unification was at stake. Gorbachev finally accepted another offer by Kohl of DM 12 billion plus an interest free credit of DM 3 billion.[1697]

In conclusion, it is appropriate to ask two questions pertaining to the discussion of the economic and financial aspects of the Soviet consent to German unification and Germany's NATO membership: (1) How to assess the DM 15 billion agreed upon for the direct costs of the stationing, withdrawal and resettlement of Soviet forces and other German assistance? Should the sums of money that were provided be regarded as adequate and reasonable or as too low? (2) Why did Gorbachev, until his telephone conversations with Kohl in September, fail to drive a hard bargain on the economic and financial issues, and why from Kohl's perspective did he (Gorbachev) suddenly put unacceptably high figures on the table only *after* the resolution of the international security provisions of German unification?

1696 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, pp. 467-68. If this was an expression of genuine belief, it was obviously based on misperception. To be blamed for the existence of the wide discrepancy between what he now demanded and what Kohl was willing to pay was not, it would seem, bad faith shown by the West German government but inept Soviet negotiating tactics.

1697 Ibid., p. 468; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 358.

As for the first question, on 12 September Gorbachev was asked on national television to comment on the impending finalization of the Two Plus Four negotiations and, more specifically, on his two telephone conversations with Chancellor Kohl. He put his explanations in the context of the conclusion of a new comprehensive treaty with a unified Germany and other documents that were being prepared, including a treaty on economic cooperation, and he linked these talks with the troop issue. A direct question was then put to him:

> [Interviewer:] And what have we acquired?
> [Gorbachev:] Yes, and what we have acquired? You are right. The Germans understand the fact that they should participate in the settlement of our returning servicemen.
> [Interviewer:] That will be fair.
> [Gorbachev:] That will be fair, and they are responding and are ready to do so within the framework of certain amounts – *in my view the amount being obtained is quite good*. I think it is a total of about 15 billion [currency not stated]. Twelve billion will be expenditures on the maintenance and settlement [of the armed forces], and there will be three billion by way of financial aid at the present time. So I would say that everything is being decided on the basis of concord and cooperation – well not immediately and not from the very outset.[1698]

Thus, perhaps predictably in view of the necessity to justify the far-reaching strategic withdrawal from Central Europe, Gorbachev expressed satisfaction with the German contribution to its cost. But everything is relative. The sum of DM 15 billion, much of it to be paid over several years, for a country as huge as the Soviet Union, pales in comparison with the net transfer of about *DM 200 billion* in public money allocated *per annum* for more than a decade (and continuing to this very day, even though at a lower level) since the achievement of German unity to the reconstruction of the new Länder.[1699]

1698 'Vremya' news broadcast, 12 September 1990, 5 p.m. GMT; television records, the Harriman Institute, Columbia University (italics mine).

1699 According to the German Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung Halle (IWH), in the period 1990-2003, annual 'net transfer costs' (*Nettotransferkosten*), i.e. expenditure mainly for social security, amounted to DM 130 billion and allocations to the improvement of the infrastructure as well as support for the restructuring, modernization and creation of new enterprises (*Aufbauhilfen* and *Sonderleistungen*) DM 68 billion; see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosten_der_deutschen_Einheit. The IWH figures were in Euro, converted here for comparison to Deutschmarks (DM).

The figure of DM 15 billion agreed upon between Gorbachev and Kohl, however, does not represent the actual total payment to the Soviet Union for its consent to German unification. The price tag is larger than that. As shown in Table 6, by mid-1991 the sum of German government and some private assistance provided to the Soviet Union amounted to approximately DM 60.1 billion.

Even if one accepts the revised figures, it would appear that German unity and unified Germany's membership in NATO were obtained relatively cheaply. The German finance minister certainly is of that opinion. In his memoirs, he quotes from notes by Franz-Josef Strauß written in 1966. He (Strauß) had thought that the Soviet Union might perhaps be tempted by an offer of DM 100 to 120 billion of investment aid to consent to a package consisting of a status for East Germany like that of Austria, exit of West Germany from NATO and the EEC, and a German commitment not to pose the question of unification until the end of the century. Waigel calculates that the figure, adjusted for inflation, would have amounted to approximately DM 450 billion in 1990 and sconcludes that 'all of those who consider the price for German unity to have been too high should think about this'.[1700]

Table 6: The 'Price Tag' of German Unification (in billions of DM)

1. **A. Grants and Commodities Free of Charge**	
1. Contributions to the Transitional Presence and the Withdrawal of the Soviet Armed Forces Pursuant to the *Überleitungsabkommen*	
– Housing Construction for Returning Officers	7.8
– Stationing Costs	3.0
– Transportation Costs	1.0
– Retraining	0.2
– Interest for the DM 3 Billion Credit	1.5
1. Stationing Costs for 1990	0.7
1. Deliveries from Berlin and Bundeswehr Stocks	0.7
1. Donations by the German People	0.2
1. Grants for Consulting and Training Programs	0.03
1. Germany's Share in EC Grants	0.4
1. **B. Credits and Credit Guarantees**	
1. Government Guarantees for Unconditional Financial Credits	1.
– Balance of Payments Credit of July 1990	5.0

1700 Waigel and Schell, *Tage*, p. 56.

– Credit Pursuant to the *Überleitungsabkommen*	3.0
1. Export Guarantees (Hermes)	19.5
1. Germany's Share in EC Credit Guarantees for Food Exports	0.3
C. Soviet-GDR Trade Imbalance	
1. Transferable Ruble Debt Account	15.0
1. Interest on that Account, 1990-91	1.9
TOTAL	**60.1**

a Adapted from Christian Meier, 'Economic Relations Between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Soviet Union in the Context of Support for Soviet Perestroika,' in Armand Clesse and Rudolf Tökés, eds., *Preventing a New East-West Divide: The Economic and Social Imperatives of the Future Europe* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1992), pp. 460-67.

As for the second problem, that of why Gorbachev and his negotiators failed to state a high price in the spring or summer of 1990 and why he demanded specific sums only in September, that is, after the most important international security provisions of German unification had already been agreed upon, five interpretations are possible. The first is that of *inept negotiating tactics*. This view could rest on the idea that Gorbachev and the government either did not recognize the opportunities that existed or were too distracted or overwhelmed by the myriad of domestic problems, including the preparations for the Twenty-eighth CPSU Congress, to deal effectively with the issue. The second interpretation is the opposite of the first, that is, *skilful, if not devious, negotiating tactics*. Soviet negotiators would pretend to agree to all major security aspects of German unification and only later, in the midst of euphoria in Bonn, would present their bill in the full knowledge that West Germany would have to pay whether it liked to or not. The third is that of *good will and faith*. This interpretation could be based on the notion that Gorbachev was quite confident or even certain of Kohl's gratitude and saw no problem, once agreement on the central security issues was reached, to 'cash in' later. The fourth is that of a *comprehensive view of future Soviet-German political and economic relations*, one that Kohl had suggested to Gorbachev as early as June 1989 in Bonn. This interpretation implies that Gorbachev assumed that a fundamental change of Soviet-German relations towards cooperation would lead to a substantial expansion of economic exchanges, including both government-guaranteed credits and private investments, and that specific sums to be agreed upon for a transitional phase were less important than the long-term benefits. The final interpretation is that of *domestic considerations and constraints*. Gorbachev, it could be argued, sought to avoid

the potentially damaging impression that major concessions on central security problems affecting the position of the Soviet Union for decades to come had been made in exchange for short-term and perhaps short-sighted economic benefit.

Although analytically distinct, the interpretations – except the second, that of devious negotiating tactics – are mutually reinforcing and in all likelihood played some role in the composite set of considerations on the German problem. Certainly, expectations as to the substantial long-term economic benefits and of a complete rearrangement of Soviet-German political relations were widely shared in the Soviet Union. For instance, one day after the finalization of the Two Plus Four agreement, *Izvestiia* commentator Alexander Bovin told his readers that German unification would change the European political landscape. He reminded them that West Germany's GDP was the third largest (after the USA and Japan); its share in world trade amounted to a quarter of the total; and its industrial might was as big as its financial clout. In the preceding year, he explained, it was the world's second largest creditor (behind Japan), and its net financial assets amounted to $427 billion. This economic giant was no longer a political dwarf. 'Must we fear [this giant]?,' he asked. His reply:

> I am convinced we must not. ... In the FRG a stable democratic society has been formed, and a return to the past is practically excluded. One can assume that trust will be established because of the traditions and experience in economic and political cooperation between the USSR and the GDR, and between the USSR and the FRG. It is not hard to imagine that *a unified Germany will be extremely interested in having a permanent partner with a huge market and constant demand for investment from abroad*.[1701]

Another centrally important clue to solving the mystery of why Moscow did not drive a hard bargain in July 1990, failed to attach tough economic conditions to unified Germany's NATO membership and thus only received relatively modest sums has been provided – at superficial consideration, not very convincingly − by Chernyaev. He argued that Gorbachev would have considered such an approach to be 'undignified'.[1702] Put differently, appearances domestically were important. To Kohl, for instance, this was confirmed in the context of a discussion on how to present the security provisions of the Arkhyz agreement. Gorbachev, according to the

1701 Alexander Bovin, 'Novaia Germaniia,' *Izvestiia*, 14 September 1990 (italics mine).

1702 Interview with Chernyaev.

German chancellor, thought that 'the first question to the federal chancellor would be: "Did Gorbachev consent to entry of unified Germany into NATO?" It would then be said [in the Soviet Union]: "The Soviet General Secretary allowed unified Germany's membership in NATO to be bought."'[1703] Waigel, similarly, quotes the Soviet leader as having posed the following question:

> What will be said when [we announce] that Gorbachev has consented to Germany's entry into NATO? What will be the repercussions on the atmosphere in the Soviet Union? [Our consent] will be interpreted as a trade for credits, as reprehensible. We are conducting Realpolitik. We must find appropriate language in order to gain acceptance.[1704]

Negotiations on German Economic Assistance and the Kurile Islands

To broaden the perspective, it is useful to compare Gorbachev's failure to link security and financial issues on the German problem in a coherent, competent and timely fashion with Soviet negotiating tactics vis-à-vis Japan on the issue of the southern Kurile Islands / Northern Territories.[1705] This procedure is appropriate given (1) the strong economic and financial position of both Germany and Japan in the world economy and their potential importance for the modernization of the Soviet economy; (2) the opportunity in both cases to link Soviet concessions on territorial and security issues with economic and financial assistance; and (3) the fact that an attempt was made to apply lessons from the negotiations with Germany to those with Japan. Put simply, in the Japanese case, at issue was a 'cash for the islands' deal. Such a deal had painstakingly been prepared in back-channel negotiations between Arcady Volsky, chairman of the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, and Ichiro Ozawa, chairman of the Japanese Liberal-Democratic Party. It was meant to form the basis of an agreement to be reached at the April 1991 summit between Gorbachev and Japanese prime minister Toshiki Kaifu.[1706]

1703 Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*, p. 437.

1704 Waigel and Schell, *Tage*, p. 46.

1705 According to Japan's position the four islands in questions – Etorofu, Kunashir, Shikotan and the Habomai group − never formed part of the Kurile Islands chain. Tokyo, therefore, referred to them as its Northern Territories.

1706 The account of the back-channel negotiations on a 'cash for the islands' package follows Lisbeth T. Bernstein, 'On the Rocks: Gorbachev and the Kurile Islands',

At the end of January 1991, Gorbachev commissioned vice president Gennady Yanaev to hold a meeting of a preparatory committee for the Gorbachev's upcoming visit to Japan. The meeting was attended by Volsky, Sitaryan, Vitali Ignatenko (Gorbachev's press secretary), Alexander Panov (head of the MFA's department for the Pacific and Southeast Asian countries), Falin and Andrei Grachev (head and deputy head of the Central Committee's ID respectively), Vassili Saplin (desk officer in charge of Japan at the CC ID), Konstantin Sarkisov (head of the Japan section of the Oriental Institute), Vladylen Martynov (director of IMEMO), Anatoli Milyukov (head of the Economic and Social Forecasting Department at Gorbachev's office) and Vladislav Malkevich (chairman of the Soviet Chamber of Industry and Commerce). Faced with reservations, hesitation, and wavering on the proposed package deal, Volsky burst out in anger:

> This is our last chance. Just think about the food and all sorts of other aid. This [discussion] is all bad. You are all politicians here. To hell with all of you. You understand nothing. Economics is more important, and [returning the islands] is the only way [the Japanese] will give us some money. ... We must go [to Japan] and not just for nothing. We must go for credits. Let's analyze again the Ozawa proposal. The Ozawa plan offers $22 billion. The plan offers short-term credits and gradual credits. What they give us immediately, and we should grab it, is $1.5 billion to buy medicines; $1.5 billion to buy food; $1 billion for consumer goods. For medium-term credits, they give us $8 billion. And for long-term credits, they give us $10 billion.
> I spoke to Ozawa, I am in touch with him, as you know. Ozawa said [sarcastically]: 'You don't need it [this money]? If you don't need it, then what do you need?' Ozawa then said' 'Give me a formula. Let's postpone the actual sovereignty over all the islands for fifteen years, but give a promise to us now that we will have them in fifteen years.'
> It's a symbolic question, but I support this solution of the so-called 'postponed sovereignty' in the following way: we give them two islands immediately, and assure them that they will get [the] two more [remaining islands] within fifteen years.[1707] We ourselves are making a mistake. ... If we don't need it [the package deal] then give me a hint and I will stop it. But what shall we do without money? We already owe them $450 million that we cannot pay back.

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unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, May 1997. Her account is based on interviews with several of the participants in the negotiations, including the January meeting, and on personal notes taken by Sergei Grigoriev, assistant to Vitali Ignatenko and executive secretary of the meeting.

1707 Essentially, that was the formula Khrushchev agreed to in 1956, that is, the immediate return of two islands – Shikotan and the Habomai group – with sovereignty over the other two islands to be settled later.

Volsky then turned to Sitaryan as the official formally responsible for negotiating a deal and told him: 'You should do it. My [opinion] is that it should either be the Ozawa line or we should not go to Tokyo.'

Earlier in the tense meeting, Sitaryan had indicated his guarded agreement in principle. He cryptically put it in the context of the failure (in essence, his own) effectively to link economic and security issues on the German problem, saying that considering '*our careless activities in the West, we should now learn how to tie things up. So the biggest question is, if we give them the islands, what do we get back*?'[1708]

For reasons which go beyond the scope of this book, Gorbachev failed to endorse the proposed package deal. There is, however, one important point to note. Despite the fact that at issue was much less territory over which the Soviet Union would lose control and that much larger sums than those agreed upon by Kohl were contemplated as part of a comprehensive settlement with Japan, no agreement correspondingly was reached. By January 1991 Gorbachev had in all likelihood become concerned about the strength of nationalist opposition to further losses of territory – in this case perceived genuinely *Russian* territory.[1709] President Boris Yeltsin, for that very reason, in September 1993 abruptly had to cancel plans to visit Tokyo to resurrect the islands-for-economic-assistance deal.[1710] The stage was beginning to be set for Putin and the reassertion of the influence of the *siloviki* and the adherents of 'Great Power' concepts (*derzhavniki*), as well as imperial, nationalist, chauvinist, 'Eurasian' and anti-Western forces, over Russian foreign policy.

1708 Ibid. (italics mine).

1709 The southern Kurile Islands (Kuril'skie ostrova) were part of the Russian Union republic (RSFSR).

1710 For detail about the sudden cancellation of Yeltsin's trip to Japan and the turn away from the idea of forging a Euro-Atlantic Community 'from Vancouver to Vladivostok' to nationalist Great Russian and Eurasian concepts see Hannes Adomeit, Russia as a 'Great Power' in World Affairs: Images and Reality, *International Affairs* (London), Vol. 71, No. 1 (January 1995), pp. 35-68.